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LUTHERAN EDUCATION



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A Binary Mix. That's what we offer in this issue.

A two-pronged set of articles that feed mind and soul with that which equips the hands; the theological/philosophical with the practical/"how to" kind.

Three of the former, first of all: Dr. *Sam Nafzger*, Executive Director of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) leads off with what will be a volume long series on the ministerial status of the Lutheran teacher. His particular focus is on the pastoral ministry as it is understood in contra-distinction to the priesthood of all believers. Later in the year we will become acquainted with the Missouri Synod's historical understanding and practice regarding the teacher's status as minister, all ending with a brief theological analysis in the May/June 1996 issue.

Next, *George Heider*, recently elected president of Concordia University, River Forest, gives his perspective on the state of higher education in the Missouri Synod during the 1990's. He is well equipped to do so. Then, *Cindy Newkirk* becomes the first of several Directors of Christian Education (DCE's) who will pioneer a new feature in *Lutheran Education* offering perspectives from the DCE's vantage point. The first effort has wide-spread application for all of us since it deals with the theology of the Cross.

If by now you are panting for some relief from this admittedly heavy fare, take heart. *Jamie Eckert* has come upon a dynamic idea of relating older children to younger in her "Cross Age Reading Partners" article. Multiple benefits from this one!

And for all our veteran readers out there, our departmental writers stand ready as ever with commentary and stimulating thoughts in general. Here again, however, we have added another on-going feature, namely, *Sue Wentz's* tips and inspiration in the teaching of music and worship practices to our children. Plans for this feature include multiple authors solicited and over-seen by Sue. We are optimistic about its possibilities.✠

*In
This
Issue*

Wayne Lucht

How To Learn Them

Would you have preferred to see the title: "How to L'arn 'em" to confirm your suspicion that only a rustic would write thus?

One of my younger colleagues is wont to twit me for my habit of saying, as we part, "Do good!" instead of the more well-enriched "Do well!" or something akin to that. Somehow, "Do good!" rings truer to my ears even though it may be recast to "Do an act of goodness" which is what is meant to begin with!

Yet "Learn Them" has a different perversity about it regarding its origins. It may very well hark back to that iconoclast of the 60's, Paul Goodman, who maintained that the child needs only the presence of a loving and mature adult in its early years to prosper in apprehending this wonder-filled world of ours.

Or maybe it reverts back to another pioneer thinker, Carl Rogers, who questioned whether there is such a thing as teaching to begin with. His point was that enabling the learner should be our goal and that, except for basic skills, only that which is trivial can legitimately be "taught".

Again, the truth of the matter very probably lies between the extremes of such advance guard thinking and our practices which somehow remain stubbornly rooted in traditions.

How does one best learn? remains the haunting question.

Last summer, a dear friend of mine, who also happens to be one of the best teachers I know, confided a recent failure in teaching that both perplexed and amused him. Although he teaches on a college level, his observations bear witness to how difficult it is to overcome long-held assumptions in getting people to learn. (Note how skillfully we avoided saying "going about this business of teaching?"). He asked his class in 19th Century church history to give reactions to certain propositions and assumptions about the Victorian period; that is, how strongly they held them.

He included a number of documented falsehoods which he then proceeded to weave into and defeat in his brilliant (my word,

for it is true) lectures during the next several weeks. He clearly repudiated their validity.

At the end of the course, he re-questioned the class as to their beliefs in the same propositions. The result? Very little change and, in fact, there seemed to be none at all! The students simply remained chained to their unexamined beliefs.

Perhaps it is in that metaphor of "chains" that we can make some clarifications, for all who teach are in the business of either forging chains for our learners or un-shackling them.

How do we forge chains?

- When our teaching style is dominated by law without leading to Gospel.
- When we elevate personal opinion to dogma.
- When suspicion rather than trust characterizes our relations with the learners.
- When all learning is translated into a system of rewards and punishments.
- When learning, then, becomes inextricably tied to such rewards and punishments and is never savored for itself.
- When students become chained to a goal of self-advancement with no thought of service to others.
- When they are not challenged to wrestle with competing values in our society but simply given the bleak alternative of accepting ours.
- When accepting what one is told is the proper doctrine without an accompanying urging to search the Scriptures.
- Where justification by faith alone without the deeds of the law dead-ends before personal piety is given a chance to be a resultant.
- When leaning on the faith of others. . .teacher, parents, community. . .becomes sufficient for one's spiritual needs.

What about un-shackling? Of course, the obverse of the above, but then also an intentional effort to help each learner attain the insights of how to put on the "whole armor of God" and having achieved that, to "stand." And that means independence from others, in a sense, with total dependence on God through Christ.

Liberator or Jailer.

How will each of us be remembered?

Welcome, Perry!

We would be seriously remiss if we were not to extend a very warm welcome to Perry Bresemann, the Lutheran Education Association's first Executive Director, who took up his duties in July.

The post itself represents a long-time goal of leaders and the general

membership of LEA. Admittedly, the genius of the organization has always been in the unusually high quality of volunteer leaders it has been able to attract over the years. Backing them up with high quality support has been the work of that excellent office manager, Barb Goodwin, who followed in the steps of the superb pioneer, Ellen Waldschmidt.

It will be interesting to see . . . and to support with vigor . . . the vision Perry brings to the task. We are especially happy with his selection, by the way, since he is one of our premier "columnists" (see "Administrative Talk" that he serves with Charles Laabs).

By the way, it would be well to mention here once again what is stated so clearly in our masthead and yet seems so doggedly overlooked by the rank and file of LEA's membership as well as resident faculty: LEA and *Lutheran Education* (the journal) are independent of each other in a sponsorship sense. The journal is produced by Concordia University, River Forest, and heartily (i.e., financially) supported by same. Yet we are happy to continue the symbiotic relation to LEA whose offices happen to be on the same campus.

Back to the first point: Welcome once more . . . and God bless . . . Perry!✝



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23. Item 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

24. Item 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100.

25. Item 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72,



The Office of the Pastoral Ministry and the Priesthood of All Believers

Introduction

The September 1990 issue of *The National Catholic Reporter* contains an article titled “History is very clear: No Eucharist, no Catholics.” It began with these thought-provoking paragraphs:

If you were to send a Protestant lay missionary couple, without the support of an ordained minister, to a remote corner of West Africa to found a new community, and if you visited them after a five-year period, you would probably find a small, vibrant, worshiping, Protestant community.

If you were to send a Catholic lay missionary couple to a similar area, without priestly support, and returned to visit them after a five-year period, you would probably find a small, vibrant, worshiping Protestant community.

The Reformation was clear in its directives. All Christians, by virtue of baptism, are priests. They are given the gospels as their tools of office, prayer as their helper and service to others as their mission.

The Roman Catholic directives are just as clear. Not all Christians are priests. The essential action of the Catholic community is the Eucharist, which can be performed only when a priest is present. The gospels are next in importance, and service flows from that.

So while the Protestant Christian can at all times represent his or her community, especially the trained and committed Protestant, the Catholic, however

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well he or she is trained, can never fully represent the community without a priestly presence. Therefore, Catholic communities can die when unsupported by the celebration of the Eucharist.

History is very clear on this matter . . . (1)

These words from a Roman Catholic, a former priest and presently the Assistant Program Director at Brawner Psychiatric Institute in Atlanta, Georgia, point in a very graphic, if somewhat distorted, way to one of the great Scriptural truths rediscovered by the Reformers of the 16th century--the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Noel Burtenshaw is certainly correct when he says: "The Reformation was clear in its directives--all Christians, by virtue of baptism, are priests." But this is not to say that the Reformers taught that all Christians are pastors.

It is just this point, however, that makes it necessary to say also that Protestant Christians have disagreed more down through the past 450 plus years about the doctrine of the ministry than about any other article of faith. This is also true of Lutherans. "Few questions . . . have prompted greater arguments than has the concept of the ministry in the Lutheran Confessions," writes Holsten Fagerberg, a contemporary Danish theologian.(2) Disagreements about the doctrine of the ministry

among confessionally-minded Lutherans in Europe became prominent in the nineteenth century. Our own church, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, was conceived and came into existence in the midst of anguished debate about the doctrine of the ministry.

More recently, the doctrine of the ministry has resurfaced at the end of the twentieth century as the most difficult and perplexing issue dividing contemporary Christendom. For over a quarter of a century, a group of Protestant denominations working for merger called the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) has wrestled with precisely this topic. The one issue the USA Lutheran churches which formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1988 could not resolve prior to merger was the doctrine of the ministry, despite a long series of papers, special committees, and consultations. In the last meeting of the Commission to Form the New Lutheran Church, it was decided to postpone the resolution of differing views about the ministry until the completion of an "intensive church wide study of the nature of ministry" could be carried out over a five-year period. This study was completed in 1992. The Task Force on the Study of Ministry proposed a plan calling for two kinds of ordained clergy--pastors

with a Word and Sacrament ministry and deacons with a ministry of witness and service. But this proposal was opposed by a group called Lutherans for Religious and Political Freedom, a Minneapolis-based organization of pastors, seminary professors and lay persons. They sent out an open letter to the 11,000 congregations of the ELCA calling for the defeat of this proposal. (3) Those opposing the Task Force's recommendation argued that the diaconate includes all the people in the church. In order for churches to grow the lay people need to be empowered. There is no need to make more clergy and bureaucracy. Changes in the Task Force proposal were recommended by the ELCA Church Council and Council of Bishops, and in August 1993 the ELCA adopted a plan which calls for having only pastors ordained.

Complicating the discussion of ministry in the ELCA is the final report of the Lutheran/Episcopal Dialogue, issued in 1991, which, by a divided vote, recommends ELCA and Episcopal "full communion" based on the eventual Lutheran acceptance of the historic episcopate, the view that ordination into the pastoral office by someone standing in historic succession of bishops going back to the Apostle Peter is necessary by divine right and that it imparts spiritual power. This teaching, held

by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican churches, usually embraces the view that the validity of the Sacrament of the Altar is dependent on the consecration of the elements by an ordained priest. The formal discussion of this recommendation in the ELCA promises to be spirited and perhaps even controversial. The proposal for full communion with the Anglicans will come before the ELCA convention in 1997.

There have also been disagreements between the LCMS and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) on the doctrine of the ministry. Disagreements go all the way back to differences on this issue between August and Francis Pieper. For the WELS, the public ministry--which includes both ordained pastors and male parochial school teachers--is divinely instituted, but not the pastoral office itself. The last time representatives between LCMS and WELS met for discussions in 1988, the ministry was one of the three issues listed by them as dividing our two churches, and Oscar Feucht's *Every Member a Minister* was hailed by the WELS participants as the best book published in the LCMS in recent years. Consistent with this understanding, the WELS decided a few years ago to ordain male teachers.

And we in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod continue to have our own discussions about the doctrine of the ministry. From the very beginning of the Synod in 1847, and even before, there has been debate concerning this doctrine. C.F.W. Walther was forced early on to come to grips with this issue, first in the debates with Marbach and Vehse in Perry County, then soon thereafter with Pastor Grabau in Buffalo and with Wilhelm Loehe in Bavaria. August Stellohorn and his follower A.C. Mueller did not hesitate to say that Walther was wrong in his understanding of the divine institution of the pastoral office.(4)

More recently, there has been vigorous debate in the Synod about issues surrounding the relationship between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers in connection with the adoption in 1989 of Resolution 3-05B "To Adopt Recommendations of Lay Worker Study Committee Report as Amended." Some of the delegates to this convention expressed strong disagreement with the provision in these "Guidelines" which permit a licensed layman, with the approval of a supervising pastor and the District President, to administer the Sacrament of the Altar in exceptional circumstances "when no ordained clergy is available and the

congregation would otherwise be deprived of the Sacrament for a prolonged period of time." This resolution was nevertheless adopted by a large majority of the voting delegates.(5)

Contemporary discussion on issues such as those referred to above has provoked a whole series of questions. Are there certain functions of ministry that only pastors can perform, and if so, what are they? Is it consistent with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions for the church to make provisions for unordained lay people to carry out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office such as preaching, baptizing, and celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar? What is the meaning of ordination, of the call, and how does a Christian congregation relate to its pastor, and how do pastors relate to other full-time workers in the church? What is the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and what are the implications of this doctrine for life in the congregation? Is every member of the church a minister? And what about the ministry of women?

Lying at the heart of topics such as these are questions about "the Pastoral Office and the Priesthood of All believers." In this essay I intend first of all to delineate the issues involved by presenting an overview

of the understanding of the doctrine of the ministry in the early centuries of the church, in Luther, and in nineteenth century Lutheranism. Then I shall present a systematic summary of the doctrine of the ministry.

I. A Historical Overview of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of All Believers

A. Set Apart Offices and The Spiritual Priesthood of All Believers in the Early Years of the Christian Church

1. The Clergy

From the very beginning, Christianity has been accompanied by offices, organization, and structure. The letters of the Apostle Paul, which include some of the earliest New Testament writings, bear witness to this. In his letter to the Philippians (61-62 A.D.), the Apostle Paul, for example, specifically greets “all the saints in Christ Jesus. . .with the bishops and deacons”(Phil.1:1). These words of greeting to the congregation in Philippi indicate that right from the earliest days of Christendom, Christians have recognized set apart ministries and have made distinctions among them.

Paul’s pastoral letters, written somewhat later, present an even more advanced stage in the development of ministerial offices. In these letters are included the

qualifications for those who hold the “office of bishop”(1 Tim.3:1-7), who are at times referred to as elders (Titus 1:5-7; cf. Acts 20:17,28), and also for deacons(1 Tim. 3:8-13). The rise of false teachers hastened the early development of an identifiable succession of leaders who could speak with authority about the teachings of Christ and His apostles. Already the Apostle Paul in his letter to Titus had said: “This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you”(Titus 1:5). He immediately proceeds to give the qualifications for a “bishop,” thereby demonstrating the fluidity of terms used for these appointed leaders. With the passing of time, the “charismatic” prophets and teachers came to be replaced altogether by “appointed” workers.

As time went on, the term bishop came to be used to refer specifically to the chief pastor of a local church, who represented the fullness of the ministry. But assistants were needed to meet the needs of multiplying parishes. By the time of the Council of Nicea in 325, the bishops had turned over a number of their functions to presbyters in the surrounding parishes not under their continuous episcopal care. The result of this delegation was that also the presbyters soon came to be regarded

as priests in their local parishes, even though the bishops retained certain functions, such as confirmation and ordination, for themselves.

Deacons, who, unlike the presbyters, were not considered in the beginning to be clergy, came to serve a mediating role between the bishop and the laity. Their chief function was to collect alms and to be responsible for church funds. They also read or chanted the Scripture lessons in public worship and assisted with the distribution of the elements in Holy Communion. There were also the widows, an order of women set apart for prayer and ministry to women. Other orders followed--orders such as sub-deacons, acolytes, lectors, doorkeepers, and even grave-diggers. By the 4th century, however, most of these orders had become clericalized. But only bishops and elders were recognized as belonging to the priesthood and were permitted to carry out sacerdotal functions. A move, for example, at the beginning of the 4th century to permit deacons to celebrate the Eucharist was soundly rejected by the Council of Nicea in 325.(6)

All of these developments during the early years of Christianity tended to accentuate a division between laity and clergy.

2. The Ministry of the Laity

The Christian Church during the first two centuries after Christ's death and resurrection was a small, closely knit body of people scattered throughout the cities of the Roman Empire. Tertullian, writing in 197 A.D., described the church as "a society with a common religious feeling, a unity of discipline and a bond of hope." Wherever three Christians are together, he says, "there is the church, even if they are laymen." These Christians meet regularly, he writes, "to read the books of God," and then "each from what he knows of the Holy Scriptures or from his own heart is called upon before the rest to sing to God."(7)

Clement of Rome is regarded as the first Christian writer to use the term layman. He writes in 95 A.D. to the church in Corinth: "...the layman is bound by the lay (*laikos*) ordinances." Clement's writings show that from the very beginning, the laity participated in liturgical worship and were not spectators of "cultic mysteries." Writings from the 2nd and 3rd centuries bear abundant testimony to the importance of the doctrine of the royal priesthood of all believers in the early church. The *Didache* assumes that a lay person in cases of necessity could baptize. Justin Martyr (d.ca.165) says that all Christians "are the true high-priestly race of God." Irenaeus (ca. 200) writes: "All who are justified through

Christ have the sacerdotal order.” And Tertullian says: “Therefore as we come from the laver, we are anointed with the holy function, just as in the Old Dispensation priests were anointed with oil from the horn of the altar.”

The “priesthood of the laity” manifested itself in the liturgy, in the recognition and/or election of clerics, in teaching (e.g., Martyr, Origen), in Christian service, in the giving of personal witness to the Christian faith in daily life and in certain “lay orders,” which tended to become clericalized over the years.

During the 3rd and 4th centuries, however, appreciation for and recognition of the position of the laity declined. As the clergy became more clearly defined, the distance between them and the congregation of the faithful increased. This distance came to be illustrated in church architecture. Churches built in the Mediterranean provinces of the Roman Empire from this period in history had a substantial screen of stone or marble dividing the nave, where the people were, from the altar area, where only the clergy could enter. No layman could participate in the administration of the altar. No psalms written by individual Christians were to be sung in church. The laity were to sit quietly in their places. After the conversion of Constantine (ca.312), not very much

remained of the “royal priesthood” shared by all members of the people of God of the first three centuries. Toward the end of the patristic period the monks of Egypt and Syria, with their asceticism, may be regarded as attempting to revive a role for the laity which prevailed during the early days of the church, but this did not affect the majority of ordinary Christians.

With these developments, the Middle Ages had arrived. During this long period of time all those abuses relating to public ministry in the church such as the priesthood having an indelible character and hierarchialism had ample opportunity to develop and grow and become inculcated into the life of the church. Eyes were closed to what the Scriptures teach about the people of God as a spiritual priesthood. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers was lost sight of, waiting to be rediscovered by the 16th century Reformers of the church.

B. Luther on the Priesthood of All Believers and the Pastoral Office

Cyril Eastwood, author of a comprehensive examination of the doctrine of The Priesthood of All Believers from the Reformation to the present day, concludes his chapter on Luther by saying that “the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers underlies the whole of his

teaching.”(8) According to Luther, all believers, lay and clergy alike, share a common dignity:

For all Christians whatsoever really and truly belong to the religious class, and there is no difference among them except in so far as they do different work. The fact is that our baptism consecrates us all without exception and makes us all priests. (“An Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality,” 1520, in Reformation Writings, Vol. 1, p. 113)

All Christians share a common privilege--to intercede for one another.

. . . we are priests, and thus greater than mere kings, the reason being that priesthood makes us worthy to stand before God, and pray for others. For to stand before God’s face is the prerogative of none except priests. (“The Freedom of a Christian,” 1520, in Reformation Writings, p. 366)

Addressing the key passage Matthew 16:18 “*You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church,*” Luther concludes that the power of the keys was not given by Christ to Peter personally, or to his successors, but rather to the whole church.

And if they claim that St. Peter received authority when he was given the keys--well, it is plain enough that the keys were not given to St. Peter only, but to the whole

Christian community. (“An Appeal to the Ruling Class,” 1520, in Reformation Writings, Vol. 1, p. 120)

For Luther, the terms Christian and priest are synonymous. Commenting on 1 Peter 2:9 he says:

It would please me very much if this word “priest” were used as commonly as the term “Christians” is applied to us. For it must be our aim to restore the little word “priests” to the common use which the little word “Christians” enjoys. For to be a priest does not belong in the category of an external office; it is exclusively the kind of office that has dealings before God

Therefore, when St. Peter says here: “You are a royal priesthood,” this is tantamount to saying, “You are Christians.” (LW, Vol. 30, pp 63-4)

In other words, Luther understand the Scriptures to teach that all Christians are priests. All can directly approach God’s throne of grace without going through any human mediator. All Christians have the same status, they all possess Christ’s blessings--the forgiveness of sins, victory over death, eternal life--and all Christians are commissioned to show forth the praises of God and to preach the Gospel to all the world.

But, according to Luther, to say that all Christians are priests is not the same thing as to say that all Christians are pastors. He writes:

For although we are all

priests, this does not mean that all of us can preach, teach, and rule. Certain ones of the multitude must be selected and separated for such an office. And he who has such an office is not a priest because of his office but a servant to all the others, who are priests. . . . This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. (What Luther Says, Plass, Vol. III. Pp. 1139f.)

It is the call of the congregation which gives one of the priests the authority publicly to administer the Word and sacraments. Writing in 1520 Luther says:

Therefore everyone who knows that he is a Christian should be fully assured that all of us alike are priests, and the authority in regard to the word and the sacraments, although no one has the right to administer them without the consent of the members of his church, or by the call of the majority ("The Pagan Servitude of the Church," 1520, in Reformation Writings, Vol. 1, p. 318)

Martin Luther's discovery of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins by grace alone through faith alone on the basis of Scripture alone in Christ alone brought with it a renewed discovery of the Scriptural teaching about the universal priesthood of all the baptized. He strongly rejected all

notions of an indelibly defined priesthood, of divinely willed distinctions within the one office of the public ministry, and of the necessity for an unbroken, historical succession of one ministerial office going back to the Apostles and specifically to the Apostle Peter. Most especially, he rejected the heresy that Christians had to go through the bishop or priest in order to claim the forgiveness of sins. But at the same time the Reformer just as strongly emphasized that God has indeed instituted the office of the public ministry in the church for the public preaching of the Gospel and the public administering of the Sacraments. Every Christian has the right to perform the functions of the pastoral office, says Luther, but not every Christian has been called to exercise these functions. The priesthood of all believers is not a license for religious individualism.

Luther's rediscovery of the spiritual priesthood of all believers had immediate implications for lay participation in worship, for preaching, for vocation, for understanding the life of the Christian. The barrier between lay and clergy was removed. All the saints could participate in public worship, so Luther became a great hymn writer. Because the Gospel in Word and the sacrament became the focus of public worship, the Bible

had to be translated into the common language of the people. Luther therefore became the great translator of the Bible into German. All communicants were given both Christ's body and blood. But perhaps the most far reaching implication of the rediscovery of the priesthood of all believers lay in the area of the understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification. Because "the baptized" have put on Christ, a good work is anything that a Christian does out of love for Christ. Good works do not make a Christian, but rather Christians do good works. There is nothing any more holy about going off to a monastery or to the cloister than serving God in any other profession in life--farming, being involved in politics, business, and especially in the calling of being a mother, a father, a son, a daughter. Such thinking, which is so taken for granted by us today, is directly connected to Luther's rediscovery of the spiritual teaching that all Christians are priests before God and have direct access to him without having to go through the hierarchy of the church.

C. 19th Century Views on the Relationship Between the Priesthood of All Believers and the Pastoral Office

Disagreements on the doctrine of the ministry among the

followers of Luther, as was pointed out earlier, developed over the years. These disagreements became especially prominent during the 19th century. On the one hand, there were those who argued that the pastoral office was divinely instituted and that it belonged to the essence of the church. Others held that this office had gradually developed in the congregation out of the priesthood of all believers as the need arose. Still others adopted a somewhat mediating understanding of the doctrine of the ministry, somewhere between these two views.

1. The Episcopal School

Some Lutherans in the 19th Century took the position that "the office" of pastor is a special estate. They argued that the pastoral office is the contemporary form of the New Testament apostolate (Stahl) and that the person who holds this office is the personal representative of Christ (Vilmar). Perhaps the best known early advocate of this understanding of the ministry was Wilhelm Loehe (1808-72) from Bavaria in Southern Germany. He held that the office of the public ministry or pastor is not derived from the universal priesthood, but that it is rather a spiritual office and gift of God. He also held that there is a "succession of elders" and that the Scriptures do not permit any participation of the laity in the functions of this office.

Stahl, Vilmar, and Loehe represented the autonomy of the ministry, speaking of the divine right of the order which did not come from the universal priesthood but was constituted by Christ, maintained itself in a ministerial succession and existed parallel with the congregation which it served.⁽⁹⁾

Theologians belonging to this school have looked to a number of passages from the Lutheran Confessions to support their position:

Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel the power of the keys or the power of bishops is in a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. (AC XXVIII, 5; Tappert, p. 81)

The Gospel requires of those who preside over the churches that they preach the Gospel, remit sins, administer the sacraments, and, in addition, exercise jurisdiction, that is, excommunicate those who are guilty of notorious crimes and absolve those who repent. By the confession of all, even of our adversaries, it is evident that this power belongs by divine right to all who preside over the churches, whether they are called pastors, presbyters, or bishops. (Treatise 60-61; Tappert, p. 330)

2. The Functionalist School

Opposed to the episcopal school's emphasis on "the office" of pastor as a special estate and to the

understanding of ordination as effecting spiritual power was what might be called the "functionalist school." According to this view, the office of the holy ministry exists in the church, not by divine command, but merely by human arrangement. What exists by divine command is not a special office but rather a function, an activity--namely, the function of preaching the Gospel and of administering the sacraments. These functions belong to the whole church. The pastoral office, therefore, exists in the church today as a result of development which has taken place in the church over the years. The net result of this view is that the office of the public ministry is virtually combined with the universal priesthood of all believers. Theologians holding this position regard ordination as nothing more than a pious custom of the church. The leading exponent of this view of the ministry in the 19th century was a professor at Erlangen University, W.F. Hoeftling (1802-53). Functionalists like to point out that the Latin rendition of Article V of the Augsburg Confession does not use the word "office" at all: "In order that we may obtain this faith, the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted." They maintain that when the confessors refer to the *Predigtamt* (preaching office), they had in mind

the active and life-giving Gospel, regardless of who it is who presents it. According to this view, office is function.

3. C.F.W. Walther

It was in the midst of these long-running debates about the doctrine of the ministry that the Saxon forefathers of the Missouri Synod left Germany for Perry County, Missouri. Led by a confessionally minded but autocratic bishop, Martin Stephan, the Saxons signed a statement while still on board the ship, the *Olbers*, on January 14-15, 1839, uniting all powers, spiritual and secular, in their bishop, Martin Stephan. Immediately upon arrival in their new home, however, charges of immorality were brought against their bishop, and on May 30 Stephan was excommunicated, deposed, and removed from the landed property of the colony by the unanimous vote of the clergy "without even a trace of participation on the part of the laity." (10)

This development sparked a major crisis among the Saxon immigrants with respect to the doctrines of the church and ministry. One group, led by Dr. Carl Vehse and later by a lawyer by the name of Marbach, became known as the "lay faction." On the basis of a copious supply of quotations from Martin Luther, this group championed such statements as the following:

All Christians are priests through Baptism by faith and must exercise the priestly office not only as a matter of right but as a matter of command.

As spiritual priests, laymen have the right to judge all doctrine and to supervise all the activities of the clergy.

The final decision in all disputes rests with the local congregation.

The concept...that the church is represented in the clergy, leads to the Papacy, and to a lack of interest in church matters on the part of the laity.

"Faith cometh by hearing" does not apply only to men who have studied and who are ordained. It applies to all Christians.

In case of an emergency a congregation may engage a man who has not studied.

Men who have not studied, yea, ordinary laymen, may administer the sacraments. (11)

The clerical party, on the other hand, began by attempting to defend the understanding of the pastoral office represented by Stephan before his deposal. By early 1841 the immigrant colony was fast approaching a complete state of disintegration. Some of the lay party, including Vehse, had decided to return to Germany, convinced that the entire Saxon venture had been a

mistake. Those who remained decided to debate these issues on April 15 and 20, 1841, in Altenburg, Missouri. The lawyer Marbach held forth for the lay party. His opponent was a young pastor, C.F.W. Walther. Thoroughly prepared for the debate by a careful study of Luther and the Lutheran dogmaticians, Walther brilliantly presented what some have referred to as a mediating position on the doctrine of the ministry. Walther's position carried the day. The colony survived, and six years later the Missouri Synod came into being. Walther's theses were approved in 1851, and they remain the official position of the LCMS on the doctrine of the ministry until the present day.

Walther's understanding of the doctrine of the ministry found some truth in each of the competing positions of the functionalists and of the hierarchialists. In opposition to the functionalist understanding of the ministry, Walther decisively held to the distinction between the office of the public ministry and the priesthood of all believers. But Walther was fighting a battle on two fronts. Not only was he opposed to the anti-clericalism of Vehse, but he certainly did not agree with the position of Stephan, nor with Pastor Grabau, who held that it was the role of the laity merely to pay, pray and obey. It is interesting to note that

during the course of these debates, Grabau at one point excommunicated the entire Missouri Synod (all 200 congregations).(12)

In a series of 14 articles published in *Der Lutheraner* between September 1860 and August 1861 under the title *Das gemeindewahlrecht* (*The Congregation's Right to Choose Its Pastor*) Walther sets forth in some detail his understanding of the relationship which exists between the pastoral office and the priesthood of all believers. Not only did Walther disagree with Grabau, but conflict also developed with Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau, Bavaria. Loehe, in response to Friedrich Wyneken's call for help, had sent numerous emergency workers to America. Loehe became more and more upset with the Missouri Synod constitution and the power which it and its congregations gave to laymen in its emphasis on the universal priesthood of all believers. Loehe feared American mob rule (*Amerikanische Poebelherrschaft*), expecting that laymen would eventually use their right of suffrage and employ American political election tactics in the selection of pastors. Walther's break with Loehe came in 1854.

In *The Congregation's Right to Choose* Walther rejects Loehe's view that "everywhere in the New Testament we see that only the sacred

office begets congregations, nowhere that the office is merely a transferring of congregational rights and plenary powers, that the congregation bestows the office.”(13) On the contrary, Walther argues on the basis of the Scriptures, the writings of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions, and the Lutheran Dogmaticians for the congregational right to elect its pastor. He writes:

If the entire congregation, i.e., all true believing Christians, have received the power of the key from Christ, then it is beyond doubt, that the entire church, i.e., all true and believing Christians, also have the right and authority to choose their own pastors.(14)

The church possesses the keys “immediately” and “originally,” says Walther. Quoting the Dogmaticians in support of this view, he strongly rejects Grabau’s charge that this view resulted from “American influences.” He writes:

They would exclaim: There you see how the Missourians introduce their American democratic ideas into the churches doctrine. However, it is well known that neither Chemnitz nor Leyser, nor Gerhard were Americans or democrats.(15)

According to Walther “the pastors use the keys, the congregation possesses them.” It is therefore a “serious error to think that ordination

must be performed by an ordained pastor, who alone has this power, through which a person chosen by the people first becomes a pastor.”(16)

With reference to the priesthood of all believers, Walther holds that “some stretch the spiritual priesthood of Christians too far, others circumscribe it in too narrow limits.” Some shrink from the spiritual priesthood “as from a horrible Schwarmerei by which the ministry is wholly abolished, all lay people men and women, are made pastors, and the worst kind of confusion is to be introduced.”(17) But Walther holds that this Scriptural teaching by no means poses a danger to the holy ministry. In response to the question, what is a priest according to the Word of God, Walther writes:

. . . a priest is a person consecrated by God, who possesses a twofold glory. The first consists in this that such a person can deal with the holy God himself, approach him, step before him, serve him, confidently pray to him for himself and others, and can offer him acceptable sacrifices. The other glory which such a priest possesses consists in this that he, as an angel or messenger and as a servant of God, can in the name of God deal with other persons, make the will of God known to them, bring them his Word, preach and interpret, and also bless

them in his name.(18)

Walther insists that according to the Word of God "all believing Christians are really such priests." Old Testament believers also shared in this glory, although, unlike New Testament priests, they "stood under the tutelage of the Levitical--legal priesthood."(19)

Here Walther quotes Luther:

Therefore all Christians together are priests, and all priests are Christians, and it would be a damning speech if one wanted to say that a priest were something other than a Christian.(20)

All Christians have been made spiritual priests by virtue of the spiritual anointing which they received in holy baptism. "To whom you remit sins," says Walther, was said not only to those who are pastors or ministers of the church, but to all Christians.

The keys were given to the church, and by the church entrusted to the pastors as stewards of the mysteries of God, yet in such a way that every member of the church can retain his right to the keys, and also exercise this right to his neighbor in case the ordinary pastor is not present.(21)

Here Walther is adamant: "As it is an error to declare preachers to be real priests, so it is also false to make a special estate of the ministry. That is what those are making of the ministry

who teach that the preachers are able, namely through ordination, to propagate themselves, and that only ordained pastors can administer the means of grace validly."(22) Writes Walther:

If it is, however, certain that the public preaching ministry is only a divine ordinance and not a special rank, since all believing Christians are of priestly rank, it follows from this 2) that there is a great difference between the New Testament and Old. In the Old Testament a sacrifice or any other action committed to the priests was invalid if it was not performed by a descendant of Aaron or of Levi, because only these were of priestly rank; in the New Testament, however, all priestly acts are valid, whether they are performed by a public preacher or by a so-called layman, because also the latter are of priestly rank together with the believing pastors. From this it is clear, that all those who maintain that an official act performed by a lay person or by an unordained pastor, whether it be preaching, or a baptism or absolution, or holy Communion is invalid--that all these with this teaching deny the priesthood of all Christians, make the public preachers to be the only priests of the New Testament, and declare the public ministry to be, instead of a divine ordinance, a special rank, like that of the priests

and Levites in the Old Testament.(23)
In another place, Walther writes:

Making the power and validity of the divine means of grace itself dependent on the right ordination is doubly abominable, since ordination is only a human, namely a churchly, not however a divine ordinance. By making God's business dependent on human institutions one nullifies God's commandment through man's commandment, therefore places the latter above them forever."(24)

Walther turns to Luther for support of this understanding of the priesthood:

We hold fast to this, that there is no other Word of God save that only which all Christians are commanded to proclaim; that there is no other baptism than the one which all Christians can give; that there is no other remembrance of the Supper of the Lord than that which every Christian may celebrate, which also Christ has instituted to be kept. . . .(25)

Consistent with this understanding of the priesthood Walther does not hesitate to claim that the term "ministry" in Scripture refers not only to "the specific order of the office of bishop and pastor, but also in general the Word of God as it is exercised and in use."(26)

He writes:

The learned . . . distinguish the ministry in abstracto, i.e., the

ministry without regard for the persons who occupy it, and in concreto, i.e., insofar as it is committed to designated persons and is administered by them according to a designated order . . . Therefore it indicates great ignorance if at present many, wherever they find the word "ministry," always understand the pastoral office by it. An examination of the old Dogmaticians shows what a bad misunderstanding that is.(27)

But it would be a mistake to conclude from this that Walther has a low view of the office of pastor, or that he therefore held that everyone is a pastor. Walther writes:

If, according to God's Word, all believing Christians are really spiritual priests, as we have seen, what follows from this? Are they by chance also all public preachers, ministers of the church, pastors, bishops? May they also, on account of their spiritual priesthood, interfere with the office of the public preachers, publicly teach side by side with them, publicly pray, publicly absolve and retain sin, baptize, celebrate holy communion and the like? By no means!(28)

Walther quotes Luther:

Therefore everyone who wants to be a Christian should be certain and well consider that we are all priests, i.e., that we all have equal power in the Word of God and in

every sacrament. Yet every one ought not to use them except through permission of the congregation or a call from those in authority. For what belongs to all in common no one can take to himself until he is called to it.(29)

For Walther, the office of Pastor is divinely instituted.

It also by no means follows from the doctrine of the spiritual priesthood of all Christians that therefore the special public ministry of preaching is merely a human, churchly institution, made by men in order to maintain good order in the church and to avoid confusion, that, namely, the public ministry is a creature, and in this sense flows naturally from the spiritual priesthood of Christians The Word of God says plainly: "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers." 1 Cor. 12:28. Furthermore: "His gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers." Eph. 4:11. Therefore it was not men, not the Christians as spiritual priests, but the eternal High Priest Himself, Christ, the Son of God, and, because it is a work outside the Godhead, the Triune God himself has established the order of the public ministry. It is a creation of the great all-wise God himself, and an ordinance in his church on earth (30)

God has instituted this office for order. Once again Walther quotes Luther:

All things are to be done decently and in order, 1 Cor. 14:40. By this however the office of preaching, which Christians have in common, is not abolished; yes, it is confirmed by it. For if not all could preach but one alone had power to speak, what need would there be to observe and command a certain order? And precisely because all have the power and authority to preach, it is necessary to observe a certain order.(31)

To be sure, in cases of necessity, lay people can exercise the office of the ministry which they possess. He writes:

. . . . Christian lay people have the office, and therefore can, in a case of necessity, even exercise it publicly . . . If the Christians did not have the office already originally, they would not be permitted, and could not exercise it even in a case of necessity, as little as a heathen; since, however, they have it already originally, then of course in a case of necessity the order must give way, when it does not serve the welfare of Christians, since the order has not been made against, but for the welfare of Christians.(32)

Walther quotes Luther approvingly:

If a small group of lay Christians were to be captured and

placed in a desert region, who did not have a priest consecrated by a bishop, and would there agree and would elect one among them, married or not, and would commit to him the office of baptizing, conduct mass (the Lord's Supper), absolve, and preach, he would truly be a priest (pastor), as though all bishops and popes had consecrated him. From this it comes that in case of necessity everyone can baptize and absolve; this would not be possible if we were not all priests.(33)

II. Nature of the Office of the Public Ministry and its Relationship to the Spiritual Priesthood--A Brief Systematic Summary

A. Ministry of the Word: Wide and Narrow Sense

God has entrusted the means of grace, Word and sacrament, to all believers. As the apostle Peter affirms, they are God's royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). Christ's mandate to His church (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15) makes every Christian a witness for the Gospel. The dominical command to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19:20) was originally given to the eleven apostles. It goes without saying, therefore, that these

words apply also to those who hold the office of the public ministry. At the same time, however, by these words the Lord imparts to the whole church, that is, to all believers, the commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. The *Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod* states,

Since the Christians are the Church, it is self-evident that they alone originally possess the spiritual gifts and rights which Christ has gained for, and given to, His Church. Thus St. Paul reminds all believers: "All things are yours," 1 Cor. 3:21,22, and Christ Himself commits to all believers the keys of the kingdom of heaven, Matt. 16:13-19; 18:17-20; John 20:22,23, and commissions all believers to preach the Gospel and to administer the Sacraments, Matt. 28:19:20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25. Accordingly, we reject all doctrines by which this spiritual power or any part thereof is adjudged as originally vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope. Or the bishops, or the order of the ministry, or the secular lords, or councils, or synods, etc. The officers of the Church publicly administer their offices only by the virtue of delegated powers, conferred on them by the original possessors of such powers, and such administration remains under the supervision of the latter, Col. 4:17. Naturally all

Christians have also the right and the duty to judge and decide matters of doctrine, not according to their own notions, of course, but according to the Word of God, 1 John 4:1, 1 Pet. 4:11. (Brief Statement, 30).

God builds and preserves His church through the ministry of the Word. The church owes its existence to the Word, not vice versa, and "wherever the church exists, the right to administer the Gospel also exists" (Treatise, 67). Christ chose His apostles to begin the task of spreading the Word and they, in turn, have been followed by faithful ministers of the Word who have been called into the office of shepherd over God's flock.

There are not, however, two ministries. Christ establishes only a single ministry for the building of His church: the ministry of the Word. The mandate which places all believers under the responsibility of making disciples of all nations is the ground or platform upon which the office of the public ministry rests. The term ministry thus has both a wide and a narrow sense. In the first sense it refers to the rights, duties, and responsibilities which belong by Christ's ordering to the totality of the spiritual priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2:9; Matt. 18:17; John 20:23; 1 Cor. 3:21f). Every Christian--young or old, man, woman, or child--shares in this ministry as a believing,

baptized child of God. By faith every Christian is a member of Christ's church and of the royal priesthood, possessing all the privileges and responsibilities of this royal station. Just as God's covenant people of old, so now believers are "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:6).

But ministry in the New Testament also has a second and more narrow meaning according to which it refers in a stricter sense to a specific office. For the sake of the church on earth (Acts 20:24; Rom. 15:16; 1 Cor. 4:1), God instituted an office into which a qualified man is to be called by the believers gathered together at a specific place. The rights and responsibilities of the spiritual priesthood belong to all Christians, but they are not each to administer the means of grace publicly, valid and efficacious though this would be. By divine institution the members of the royal priesthood are to call, that is, elect, choose, or appoint, qualified individuals to do this in their name and stead (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 2:2; Acts 14:23; Eph. 4:11; Rom. 1:1).

The man called, therefore, does publicly by God's will what belongs to the ministry of the Word. A congregation does not surrender its rights and responsibilities when it calls a pastor. "The authority to call, elect, and ordain ministers," as the Lutheran confessors state, is a God-

given gift “which no human authority can wrest from the church.” (Treatise 67)

B. The Office of the Public Ministry: Distinct, though Not Separate, from the Priesthood of Believers

The distinctive nature of the office of the public ministry must not be lost as the prerogatives and duties of the general priesthood are delineated. God *has established the pastoral office and He fills it through the congregation's call*. C.F.W. Walther very properly emphasized this truth in his theses on the ministry. In the first of his theses *Vom Heiligen Predigtamt Oder Pfarramt*, Walther states that “the holy ministry, or the pastoral office (*Pfarramt*), is an office distinct from the priestly office, which belongs to all believers.” On the basis of the Scriptures Walther shows “that there is in the church an office for teaching, shepherding, governing, etc., which does not belong to Christians by reason of their general Christian calling.” Just as all are not called to be apostles, so not all are to be pastors.

A God-given, wholesome, and blessed relationship exists between ministry in the wide sense on the part of the royal priests, and ministry in the narrow sense by the called servant of the Word. God is a God of order, and it is by His divine

ordering that the particular office of the public ministry (in the New Testament elder, bishop, overseer, pastor, shepherd, presbyter, and teacher are synonymous terms for this office) exists in and for the church. The fact that the work of the pastor is essentially the same as the ministry entrusted to all the “priests” proclaiming the Word is not intended by God to create a tension that is adversarial. On the contrary, these two lofty offices or stations, both instituted by God, must be understood as two poles of an ellipse around which the ministry of the Word turns, so that the Gospel may be smoothly and effectively promulgated in the world.

C. The Office of the Public Ministry is a Divine Institution

God Himself has ordained the office of the public ministry. This office did not appear as the result of a process of evolutionary development in the church, designed merely to meet utilitarian concerns. Nor did it originate as the byproduct of first-century wisdom or the enlightened discretion of early leaders, as if to say that the church created the ministry. Rather, God called the pastoral ministry into existence. It was God's idea that this office exists. And, to be sure, He instituted this office for the sake of good order in the church.

Christ, the head Shepherd of

His church, directed that there would not only be apostles for the founding of the church, but He also provided for their successors in the preaching office (Acts 20:17, 28; 2 Tim. 2:2). There would be this difference between them: the apostles entered upon their office through the direct call of Christ, their Lord; their successors, or under-shepherds, enter the preaching office through the call of the congregations they are to serve (Acts 14:23). The apostles and their under-studies guide the congregations and also regularly ordain the new incumbents of the pastoral office (Tit. 1:5,7; 1 Tim. 3:2; Acts 6:3,6).

The apostle Peter recognizes the legitimacy and validity of his fellow elders or pastors who, like he, tended the flock of God faithfully and humbly (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Paul reminds the elders of the congregation at Ephesus that it is by the will of the Holy Spirit that they are "to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Numerous other New Testament references bear out the divine origin of the pastoral office (cf. John 21:15-17; 1 Cor. 3:5; 4:1; 9:14; 12:28; Eph. 4:11; Col. 1:7; 1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim 2:1; Heb. 13:17). The office of the Christian pastor, therefore, is grounded in God's express will and may be regarded as an extension of the apostolic office and therefore also

of Christ's own ministry.

D. The Call into the Office of the Public Ministry

The office of the public ministry has been instituted by God for the public proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. These functions were originally carried out by the apostles, who were called into the apostolate directly by Christ. The occupants of the office of the public ministry, however, are now to be chosen or elected mediately through the instrumentality of the royal priesthood in a given locale. It is with them that the ultimate authority for administering the means of grace lies.

The key issue here is a recognition of the authority given by God to all believers. By assiduous study of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the writings of Luther, C. F. W. Walther came to see how central the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is for the proper understanding of the doctrines of church and ministry. Walther's understanding of this doctrine enabled him to set to the side both the presumptuous threats of hierarchical tyranny on the part of the clergy and also populist and uncontrolled over-reaching by the laity. According to Walther, it is God's express will that a local congregation (or group of congregations) fill this high office by

electing a qualified man to carry out its functions. In so choosing, the members of the priesthood of believers do not surrender their sovereign rights or powers. What the pastor is to do in the stead and name of the congregation remains fundamentally the responsibility of the priesthood of believers, and it would be correct to say, therefore, that a pastor does no more, and can do no more, than what a congregation itself has the authority to do. Nor does the congregation's call diminish in the slightest the divine nature of the office of the public ministry.

Conclusion

Now is not the time for us Lutherans to quarrel about the doctrine of the ministry. Ordinarily, those priests who have not been recognized by the church through the apostolic custom of ordination ought not carry out the distinctive functions of the pastoral office such as public preaching and public administration of the sacraments. To say this in no way minimizes the importance of the priesthood of all believers. Nor is this to deny that there may be rare and unusual situations when exceptions can and should be made. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers does not contradict the Scriptural truth that the pastoral office is divinely instituted, that this office is God's will for the sake of good order in the church, that one of

the priests who possesses the Scriptural qualifications for this office be selected to hold this office in the congregation and carry out the distinctive functions of this office publicly--i.e., in behalf of and with accountability to the others.

But having said this, it is high time that we in the Missouri Synod reclaim our Reformation heritage, that we take the doctrine of the priestly office of all the baptized out of the slogan category and put it to work in the living theology and practice of our life together in the church. May God grant it!✠

End Notes

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3. "Council approves lay diaconal ministry," *The Lutheran*, May 1993, pp. 32-34.
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6. Cf. John Knox, "The Ministry in the Primitive Church" in *The Ministry in Historical Perspective*, Niebuhr And Williams, eds. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956.
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20. Ibid., p. 83.
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22. Ibid., p. 95.
23. Ibid., pp. 102-3.
24. Ibid., p. 109.
25. Ibid., p. 129.
26. Ibid., p. 130.
27. Ibid., p. 136.
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32. Ibid., p. 132.
33. Ibid., p. 118.

Chrismons Highlight 1995 Wheat Ridge Christmas Seals

“Great Joy for All People” is the theme of the 1995 Wheat Ridge Ministries Christmas Seals. This year’s Christmas Seals combine artistic beauty with Christian history.

St. Louis freelance illustrator Art Kirchhoff combined original artwork with chrismons to produce the 36 seals. Chrismons use monograms or symbols which date back to the early Christian church to proclaim some aspect of the nature or mission of Jesus, or of the Triune God.

Congregations are not charged for the seals, but rather are asked to encourage members to make a contribution to Wheat Ridge. Funds gathered through the annual Christmas Seals campaign are used by Wheat Ridge to provide “seed money” grants to new ministries of health and hope through Lutheran churches and related agencies.

Congregations may also order a companion Advent devotional booklet in quantity, at a cost of 50 cents per copy, which feature daily lessons by nine inspirational writers.



LCMS Higher Education in 1995 through the eyes of a 1975 College Graduate

What if, like Rip Van Winkle, those of us who graduated from college in 1975 awoke on a campus today? Aside from our suspecting that we had just slept through the longest and driest commencement speech on record, what would appear before our eyes? In particular, how has higher education changed?

For those who, like me, graduated from a Concordia in that year, the answer is a Pauline “much in every way.” As I look forward to taking on a leadership role at the senior institution in the Concordia University System, it strikes me as worthwhile to take stock of the changes our colleges and universities have undergone over the past score of years, with particular interest in where these changes leave us, as we anticipate the beginning of a new millennium of God’s grace and education’s challenges.

One of the most striking changes is the tremendous increase in diversity on our campuses. Twenty years ago our colleges were still largely “single-purpose institutions,” dedicated largely (although never exclusively) to the preparation of pastors or teachers. Today a wide variety of programs for church and secular vocations is offered. While the reasons for this change differ among institutions, they largely represent a confluence of necessity and opportunity. Diversity is also much more evident among our students: no longer do our student bodies consist almost entirely of Euro-American young adults between the ages of 18 and 22. Students of all ages now come to us for undergraduate and graduate education. The causes of this dramatic change are varied. For one thing, despite the recent uptick in demographic trends, we are still a long way from the sheer quantity of

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traditional-age students who came to college in the "baby boom" years. For another, economic restructuring in our society has led to the desire (or necessity) to gain a bachelor's (or second bachelor's) degree to compete for a job, or to earn a graduate degree to retain one. Ethnic diversity has also increased at our Concordias. In part this reflects an increasing commitment on the part of LCMS congregations to outreach beyond the Germanic "ghetto"; in part it is a function of efforts by the Concordias to enrich the educational experience of all their students in this way; in part it results from the attractiveness of our institutions to non-Lutherans (and even non-Christians) as places where they can obtain a high-quality, values-centered education at what remains (for independent institutions) relatively low cost.

To be sure, that last clause requires every qualifier that can be loaded into it. By comparison with the tuition and fees paid by my classmates and me twenty years ago, even allowing for inflation, today's costs are markedly higher. Again, there are many causes, most notably at the Concordias the dramatic decline in the portion of operating revenues supplied by the Synod (which, for still other reasons, simply doesn't have the money to send). However, the upshot for students and their families has been painful and

increasingly unmanageable debt-loads, while for institutions it has meant high and increasingly unmanageable percentages of tuition income rebated in the form of institutional financial aid. At worst, an institution can be forced to choose between an attempt to attract proportionately more affluent students (thereby moving away from those it has traditionally served) and an effort to bring in as many students as possible, regardless of their likelihood of success--either of which can present both moral and practical problems. As a result, institutions like the Concordias face intense pressures to raise their own support from alumni and other friends, both for on-going operations and for endowment.

But more has changed than curricula and student faces and finances. Faculty turnover in the '90s continues at a remarkable pace, as the many professors first appointed to teach the "boomers" in the '60s reach retirement age. It is impossible to overestimate the potential effect of the departure of so many of those who have been the Concordias for so long. While there are, to be sure, always advantages to new blood and new perspectives, those who are leaving take with them an understanding of education for life and service which is not taught in leading graduate schools, but only

learned through ministry side-by-side with those who have already “got it,” as a matter of professional formation. In many ways, of all the changes mentioned so far, this one is of the greatest concern to me.

Still other changes are upon us. Twenty years ago, I wrote my college papers on an Olympic portable, manual typewriter (even ten years ago, that was only beginning to change). Now it is not merely a matter of technology altering how we do what we’ve always done (like writing this essay), but of its making possible things we’ve never done before. Higher education is only beginning to see the possibilities for the teaching/learning process, including both more individualized instruction and more effective collaborative learning, to name but two like outcomes.

To be sure, any one of these changes (or the many others which might have been described) can be regretted, and like any “old grad” I do my share of longing for what used to be. But as much as I am convinced that there are many features of the old “Synodical system” which we have let go at our loss, it is equally clear that neither church nor world is well served by an attempt to roll back the clock. Fact is, the Concordias of 1995 must be different from those of 1975 because we live and serve in a very different

context. To cite but one example, twenty years ago, our world often appeared to be binary: the democratic West and the communist East; conservatives and moderates; blacks and whites. Today we see complex and interlocking issues. We see rainbows and shades of gray. What is now required of leaders in higher education is two capabilities: the ability to reframe the painful pressures of change into the motive force of new initiatives; and the ability to rally support from the institution’s many stakeholders behind a vision which casts our strong heritage of excellent Lutheran Christian higher education in such a way that prospective students and supporters recognize a source of help for their needs, whether or not they have previously articulated them.

Let me suggest one contribution in particular which a Concordia University or College can offer. There is much discussion at all levels of education these days about the need for the improved teaching of values. The discussion is welcome and points to a recognition both that there is, in the end, no such thing as education without values and that our world is in desperate need of graduates imbued with qualities such as respect for others and commitment to honesty and fairness. If anything, the very existence of the discussion presents a great opportunity, as we

can fairly claim to have offered values-centered education from our foundings. However, if the discussion goes no further, it can easily be undercut by a relativism which simply holds competing systems of values in parallel, as of equal worth. What is called for today is *moral leadership*, a willingness to advocate and evidence the tenets of the faith we confess, including ethical principles, while appreciating and learning from the wide variety of values systems evidenced in a world of diverse cultures and beliefs. Given their historic interests and commitments along these lines, the Concordias can both help meet a great need and expand their own base of support for further ministry and growth.

Such an emphasis can only be enhanced by a remarkable development within the 1990s: the possibility of concerted action by the Concordias through the formation of the Concordia University System. While the CUS will not eliminate competition among the institutions, it is proving to be illustrative of the potential for a new perspective to be beneficial beyond the ability of its initiators to foresee. For starters, the gathering this summer of the faculties

of all ten Concordias (for the first time in over thirty years) can only lead to yet-unimagined collaboration at the individual level. To be sure, most of the benefits of CUS remain in the realm of potential, but the determination of the system leadership to involve a broad range of faculty and administrators in planning and to ensure that the chief locus of initiative and decision-making remains at the local institutional level augurs well for the years ahead.

In short, it's an exciting time to be in LCMS higher education. It's exciting because of what has not changed: the one Scriptural Gospel and the Lord whom it proclaims. But it's also exciting because of what has changed, including the mix of people and issues sketched above. As a colleague of mine at Concordia/Seward put it, "Not all change is improvement, but all improvement requires change." As I move from one fine institution to another (itself a very personal encounter with change!), I anticipate that both the challenges and opportunities presented by our times will only increase. In any event, it's unlikely that anyone involved will sleep through to 2015.✠

Cross-Age Reading Partners: Building Readers and Friendship

“I really enjoy reading to the smaller kids. I feel that I am sharing a whole new world with them. A world that they will want to explore some more. Worlds that you can never physically travel but in your imagination you can travel again and again.”

Emily Figer

Sixth Grade Student

Hope Lutheran School

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The Knock on the kindergarten door signaled the time had come. Immediately smiles covered nineteen eager faces as the fifth and sixth grade combined class assembled inside the door. With the teacher’s approving nod, they eagerly found their partners.

“I saw you play volleyball yesterday.”

“What book did you bring?”

“Where is Julie?”

“Look, I just lost a tooth!”

Within a minute, the pairs scattered themselves around the room and began reading together.

Cross-age reading occurs by pairing an older student with a younger student to explore literature together. The experience provides academic, social and personal growth for all students involved. Easily established and continued, this arrangement provides opportunities rich with possibilities for collaborative work.

Working Models

There is not one perfect format for cross-age reading partners. Listed below are several successful programs designed to meet the particular needs of the

teachers and students involved.

Berylwood Elementary School

Chapter-One teachers Cindy Southern and Teri Johnson promoted cross-age reading with their Rent-A-Reader program at Berylwood Elementary in Simi Valley, California. At-risk fifth and sixth grade students in their classroom selected three books between the kindergarten and second grade levels. The students rehearsed their books and practiced story sharing techniques such as holding the book, reading slowly and asking questions. When the student was ready, a poster in the workroom, with the reader's photograph, advertised their availability. Primary teachers scheduled twenty to thirty minute appointments for the "Rent-A-Reader" to read to their classes and lead short discussions about the books. Mrs. Southern and Mrs. Johnson designed certificates for the class to present to the guest reader. The experience ensured the "at-risk" student would feel successful and validated as a reader.

Forest North Elementary School

Kyle Cassidy's fifth grade students read to a first grade class each week for twenty minutes. Allowed to choose their own partners, most of the children liked their initial choice, yet a few asked to change. Designed to let the "home"

class read to the "visiting" class, the classes alternated hosting the event. However, both partners usually ended up reading on the same day. Intrigued by watching the older students teach the younger friends to read, Mrs. Cassidy noticed the various strategies her students employed and believed this validated their own learning while having fun. Looking up to the older students, the younger friends became more confident in their own abilities. Occasionally, an older student assisted in the first grade room during special activities. For a few first grade students having problems with fighting, the reading mentor became a mediator with the opportunity to listen privately and respond about the aggression.

Hope Lutheran School

Laura Warrick, Liz Zoch and Jamie Eckert from Hope Lutheran School in Austin, Texas, devised a workable cross-age reading program. Free to select their partners, nineteen fifth and sixth graders read one-on-one with the kindergarten class while the remaining six students read to small groups in first grade. Each week the organizational pattern was reversed, allowing all the younger students to have one-on-one and small group interactions. Before Friday morning, the fifth and sixth graders selected books from the library or their homes. They almost

always finished the books they brought after which the younger partners selected new titles. Teachers moved around the room listening to the readers and keeping the pairs on track when needed. The opportunity for her more reluctant students to read aloud pleased Mrs. Warrick, fifth and sixth grade teacher. Each week her students asked, "Is it time to read to the younger kids yet?" Excited to see her children willing to read to the older students, Mrs. Eckert noticed the kindergartners often "read" stories from their personal journals and familiar books.

Robertson Elementary

Implemented to "hook" kindergarten students not interested in print, several "good readers" from the fourth and fifth grades read once each week for ten to fifteen minutes. To prepare the older partners, kindergarten teacher, Sheryl Whited, invited the Angel Club members to listen to her read with expression then discussed her expectations for the program. Mrs. Whited stressed to the students to "make the experience fun" and read the same book more than once. From her classroom collection, Mrs. Whited selected the books the older children read. She attributed the success of the program to the ownership of the kindergarten students and the one-on-one attention they received.

Xenia Voigt Elementary School

Each week for thirty minutes the first and third graders at Xenia Voigt Elementary School in Round Rock, Texas, read to each other. Although the students were only two grade levels apart, teachers Cathy Peters and Jean Kirkland felt the students worked well together. Careful to pair the students so that there was a gap in ability levels, all students felt successful. Both classes anticipated their time together and especially enjoyed alternating the setting between the two classrooms. The pairs also collaborated to write stories, plays and puppet shows. At Christmas they held a gift exchange. On one occasion, each older student wrote and illustrated a personalized book about their younger partner.

Producing Readers

Producing "lifetime readers, not schooltime readers" is the objective of teachers and parents (Trelease, 1989, xxiv). According to *A Nation at Risk: The Risk: Report of the Commission on Reading*, reading aloud to children "is the single most important activity for the building of knowledge required for eventual success in reading" (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott & Wilkinson, 1985, p. 23). Along with providing daily read-aloud experiences, scheduling DEAR (Drop Everything And Read) time, creating

a print-rich environment and sharing favorite books, cross-age reading partners provide the essential one-on-one interaction children desire.

Becoming Literate

Children learn best when they make their own choices (Fisher, 1991). Responsible for selection, the older child finds a book for both partners to enjoy. Often the younger partners also select a favorite book to hear or read to their older partners. Either way, the children enter the joyful world of reading through a personal avenue.

"Children associate reading with pleasure and love" (Huck, 1992, p. 521) as they thrive on the individual attention received during shared reading. According to Huck (1992) the benefits of reading aloud continue from the affective to the academic. Immersing children in literature provides "story" structure and promotes an understanding of the narrative form. Reading and talking about the stories develop vocabulary. Not only do the children hear the words from the text, but the meaningful interactions also strengthen their word usage. Through experience, children become aware of story sense as beginnings, plot development, and endings. Characterizations become alive, as children tell, write and predict stories of their own. These advantages blossom as children "taste the magic

of stories." (Trelease, 1989, p. 10)

Sharing reading experiences filter into the students' writing as young children, eager to write stories and draw pictures for their friends, find opportunities to write about reading partners. Classes work together to compose invitations to special events and thank you notes. Older students respond to their feelings and pose insights and solutions for working with partners.

Consumed with self-doubt, poor readers in older grades are not eager to read orally with their own peers. Reading to a younger child removes this risk. The brightest younger child most often does not read as well as the poorest older reader. As with emergent readers, the more older children read, the more fluent they become. Reading to a partner becomes a safe arena for authentic practice.

Enhancing Relationships

Reading together creates a social environment where reactions and feelings related to the text are shared and explored. In chapter one of *Emerging Literacy: Young Children Learn to Read and Write*, William Teale and Elizabeth Sulzby discuss the significance of not viewing literacy as a "cognitive skill to be learned, but a complex sociopsycholinguistic activity." (Strickland & Morrow, 1989, p. 2) Meaningful social interactions

around print set the stage for language development.

A friendship grows within the bonds of cross-age reading as reading partners eat lunch together and wave to one another in the gym. Although the older students may not admit liking the attention, having someone that admires them outside their family and peer groups enhances their self-esteem. For a few minutes each week the younger student captures the total attention of the older friend and glows with excitement. Literature is at the heart of these bonds.

Modeling Literacy

When children learn from people they admire, a positive view of literacy transmits through the shared experiences (Fisher, 1991). Opportunities to get hooked on reading come alive as the older children model inflection, voice characterization and phrasing and track their fingers below the text. However, modeling does not end at the classroom door. Teachers and administrators believe cross-age reading relationships hold more responsibilities than transmitting a love of reading. Older students recognize the accountability of having younger friends look to them for guidance in behaviors and attitudes.

The teacher also models literature behaviors. Role-playing

provides a useful vehicle for introducing the reading partner relationship. Younger children learn what to expect while the older students experience how to manage younger partners who have inappropriate behaviors. Before beginning the program, the older students observe the teacher read, and then they discuss storytelling techniques. Jim Trelease provides read-aloud strategies and favorite read-alouds in his book, *The New Read-Aloud Handbook* (1989).

A second responsibility lies with the usage of time as reading partners share stories. The teacher that cleans up from the past activity or visits while the students read does not hold literacy in high esteem. Focusing energy on interacting with the pairs of students allows teachers to make informal assessments, read to children, or listen to a favorite story. Upon completion of the activity, teachers share an excitement for the program by debriefing with the students (Carroll & Wilson, 1993).

Assessing Growth

As the pairs work together, teachers can make informal assessments and keep students on task. *Joyful Learning, A Whole Language Kindergarten*, describes the use of anecdotal record and check lists to assess emergent readers (Fisher, 1991). With these tools

attached to a clip board, the teacher moves from group to group and notes student behaviors and abilities such as interest in books, levels of concentration, conversations centered on text and book choices. When younger children choose to read to the older partner, the teacher records the child's developmental reading stage. Teachers capitalize on the teachable moment by pushing questions to higher levels and clarifying misunderstandings.

Recording observations, teachers also gather informal assessments of the older children. Picture books require the reader to reflect an understanding of punctuation, dialogue and meaning in their voice and often contain difficult vocabulary. Teachers monitor fluency and evaluate understanding as they listen to the types of questions asked by the older students. When interest sparks on a particular genre, author or theme, the teacher suggests further reading and tracks the students' interests.

Reading partners provide an

opportunity for both partners to grow as literate individuals. Allowing them time each week to select and share quality literature enhances relationships and opens new worlds of opportunities through reading. When a child associates reading with pleasure and attention, teachers, administrators and parents can "never underestimate the power of a real story to take a child into the literacy world." (Huck, 1992, p. 522)†

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DID YOU KNOW. . . Concordia College, River Forest, IL held its first summer session from June 27 to July 2, 1932. The cost of two courses, library fees, and board and room was \$10, a reflection of the depression economy. (College With A Cause)



Gospel, Law and Lutheran Schools

Leaders in Lutheran schools often seek to implement “gospel centered” codes of conduct or “Christian based” behavior management policies. The inspirations for these initiatives, the wish to avoid legalism and the desire to ensure the centrality of the gospel in the life of the school, are highly commendable. However, there is a tradition in Lutheran theology which assesses some of these efforts as poorly based and invalid, despite the good intentions of the leaders.

Hebart believes church schools function as expressions of the kingdom, or realm, on the left, where God governs through the law. “All our thinking about education as Christian education must begin with the law.”(1) Law is here applied in its first usage as an expression of the natural world for the good ordering of that world. This tradition goes back to Luther: in fact it comes from him. Sturm summarizes his view thus:

It is theologically impossible to draw a normative, evangelical theory of education and instruction directly from the Gospel. Education belongs to the sphere of reason that has been liberated for genuine secularity by the Gospel.(2)

The operations of Lutheran schools make it obvious that they are essentially in the realm of creation, the sustaining and ordering governance of God’s left hand. They meet goals and requirements set by the state. They may, as in Australia, receive government assistance, and they are alternatives to schools provided by the state.

If parents select a Lutheran school in preference to a state-provided one, they are not opting out of the secular realm. That is impossible. Consciously or not, they are opting for a school which attempts something a government school in a secular state with a pluralistic society should not, and cannot, do. That is to witness to:

a distinction between two ways of God’s working in the world, two strategies that God uses to deal with the powers of evil and the reality of sin, two approaches to human beings, to mobilize them for active cooperation in two distinctly different kinds of institutions, one created

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as an instrument of governance seeking justice through the administration of law and preservation of order, and the other created as an instrument of the gospel and its ritual sacraments, announcing and mediating an ultimate and everlasting salvation which only Christ can give in an act of unconditional love and personal sacrifice.(3)

If Lutheran schools are instruments "of [God's] governance seeking justice through the administration of law and preservation of order," questions arise. Where does the gospel fit? What is the church's task in its schools? What are the purposes and goals of Lutheran schools? Hebart suggests:

The responsibility of the church in the field of education is. . . to point to the significance of the Law in (the secular) area, but equally and more, to proclaim and act and live the Gospel in that area, and to know that this area is under the Law of God and that there is forgiveness for the sins by which we all rebel against the Law, and that we are renewed by the Gospel to use the secular, as God would have us, to His glory.(4)

In his *raison d'être* for church schooling, Hebart has also clarified how law and gospel should function in Lutheran classrooms. The importance of their role is seen in his conclusion: "Christian education is different from all other education in that it is the same

education, carried on in the light of Law and Gospel."(5) Few Lutheran educators would disagree with this definition.

However, the debate surrounding Delbert Schulz's "Law and Gospel in the Classroom"(6) indicates that when Lutherans discuss classroom control and student discipline, disagreement and confusion reign and presuppositions far removed from Hebart's are championed.

Schulz is clear where he stands: "It is a misuse to place all the students under the Law."(7) For him, the "classroom. . . is the church"(9) and this means school discipline, in conformity to Galatians 6:1, is to be one-on-one and gentle. "A gentle approach followed by forgiveness can be risky but it's the New Testament way."(10) Schulz believes, and advocates, that classrooms should be organized "so that there is control without the Law".(11)

Let us examine more closely Schulz's views regarding the application of Law and Gospel and the Two Kingdoms' paradigm within Lutheran classrooms.

For Schulz, the "classroom is the church" since it is a place "where people are gathered in Christ's name to study his Word, pray, sing and worship in His body."(12) The logic and assumptions of this line of reasoning imply that a believing

family is “church” and should, by analogy, function on a gospel basis without the Law. Luther disagrees. For him the family is foundational to the secular realm of creation, “for God has put this estate right on top of all others . . . he has set it up to stand in for him here on earth”.(13) It is the key to the web of relationships and responsibilities in God’s secular rulership.

The secular government, the government officials, the educators, the fathers and mothers, and also the children, all have a most definite, God-ordained position assigned to them.(14)

The structure and role of these natural estates, or orders, flow from and are determined by law; the Fourth Commandment presupposes and governs relationships in a family. Luther believed:

One cannot make claims for this sphere directly from the Gospel. Human reason and nature know how to proceed in this area. That applies to the State, to business, to the questions of one’s vocation, and also to the problems of education.(15)

Family or schoolroom discipline should be determined by sanctified common sense: “the maternal heart knows more than is contained in all the books on wisdom.”(16) The criterion is “the best reason can furnish.” Teachers liberated by the Gospel can and should make wise and unencumbered

use of psychology and other worldly wisdom in setting and maintaining classroom control. The classroom is not church--to seek to make it so is to falsely spiritualize God’s left hand governance.

As with all misapplied theology, there are unfortunate practical consequences in the sort of approach advocated by Schulz. Luther asks, “If anyone attempted to rule the world by Gospel and to abolish all temporal law . . . what would he be doing?” His response is pungent:

He would be loosing the ropes and chains of the savage wild beasts and letting them bite and mangle everyone. Just so would the wicked, under the name of Christian, abuse evangelical freedom, carry on their rascality, and insist that they were Christians subject neither to law or sword.(17)

Luther was writing in general terms, but experience suggests his words ring true in the particular environment of schoolrooms.

Since they are citizens of both realms, believing teachers and parents have an additional mandate beyond establishing good order and cultivating civic responsibility. To help them meet this responsibility in God’s right hand governance, Luther furnished parents and teachers with a catechism. The contents of the *Small Catechism* indicate what Luther saw as the responsibility of heads of households and teachers. This is to

help their charges through Word, sacrament, confession and absolution to daily drown the old Adam and live new lives in Christ in prayer, praise and servanthood.

The Word, as exemplified by the Catechism, comes and is experienced as Law and Gospel. Which way it is received depends not just on the intention of the teacher but also on the state of the recipient. What is intended to be a gospel word can be received as law.(18) Forde demonstrates that when, in sheer grace, "God imputes righteousness, he makes us sinners at the same time".(19) No other outcome is possible. This side of death we are *simul justus et peccator* and therefore subjected to the Word as law--"It would make no sense for God to forgive sins if we weren't actually sinners."(20) Therefore we experience the Word as law to uncover our sin, and gospel to recreate and heal us. Schulz's wish to apply only the gospel to students cannot be fulfilled; the nature of the Word and the nature of students prevent this. Furthermore, infractions are breaches of the law!

It is necessary that educators recognize the need to apply the Word as Law and Gospel. However, this dictum can be misinterpreted. For example, punishment for a misdeed can be viewed as applying the law (in its sin-revealing mode) and excusing

or forgiving a student who apologizes for a wrong is perceived as "giving them the gospel." The danger here is that the holy, killing and resurrecting Word of God, received as "Law and Gospel, is replaced by a "word of the teacher" which neither convicts of sin nor results in the forgiveness of sin.

There are other dangers here. Those making these assumptions can, like Schulz, see applying the Gospel as essential and the use of the Law as a last resort--or no resort at all. This results in the chaos--"carry on their rascality"--which Luther sought to avoid by separating God's two ways of acting in the world. As Schulz acknowledges, "a gentle approach followed by forgiveness can be risky"!

Schulz's "gentle approach followed by forgiveness" requires clarification. If it means excusing students because they are sorry for their infraction, we are on very slippery ground. Sorrow for wrongdoing is not repentance; that involves confession to God produced by the Word. Forgiving someone because they are sorry for some action is not the equivalent of confession and absolution where Law and Gospel, the latter entirely unmerited, create new life. Schulz's paradigm can make obtaining the gospel a work, with sorrow the necessary precondition. Jenson believes that Lutherans, of all people,

often fail to overcome the assumptions behind the medieval practice of penance. In attempting to “make the gospel central,” they end up arguing along these lines:

You are not actually sorry? Do you wish you were sorry?

No? Do you regret not wishing you were sorry? You can say that?

Good! God forgives you.(21)

This all too familiar Lutheran line does not bring forgiveness. It speaks about forgiveness, but makes it conditional. The reformation was in vain! Jenson says the word needed is something like:

‘You are an adulterer? So stop!

You can, for the Lord lives and will at the last and in any case . . .’

Such a promise is a forgiving word, whether it contains the word forgiveness or not. (22)

Where does that leave teachers in dealing with students?

Most, if not all, student infractions, e.g., late submission of an assignment or disruptive behavior, should be dealt with, initially if not entirely, as sanctified common sense suggests. A transfer to the realm on the right through the application of the Word in private confession and absolution may be appropriate in some instances. Private confession should be practiced whenever appropriate. However, for the vast majority of classroom (and family) situations, the wrong and its rectification need not move beyond the realm of creation.

Brothers and sisters in Christ within families and schools should be reconciled to each other. But such forgiveness between believers is not a substitute for confession and absolution, although in some circumstances it may include it. The forgiveness practiced between those in Christ is a consequence of the Word, through Law and Gospel, making all things new. It is made possible and motivated by the Gospel. Even if we could be perfect in forgiving others, it would not make us “in Christ”. However, as the new Adam lives in us, we become truly forgiving. The forgiveness which should occur between Christian parents and their children, or teachers and students in Christ, does not dispense with the need for discipline, and or punishment, where this is appropriate. However, where the gospel has set parents and teachers free, their disciplining will not be for its own sake, nor will it be vindictive, but will flow from love.

Luther was well aware that children may reject the Word. This does not mean that such children should be abandoned: “Rather should one nurture and care for them as though they were the very best Christians and commend their faith to God.”(23) However, it does mean teachers need to remember that there is no guarantee of success when they apply the Word. Luther understood

this. Therefore he can "never speak in a pietistic way of education to bring about faith." (24)

In undertaking the tasks in the governance of God's Left Hand, believers have an advantage over pagans. The identity of faithful teachers is grounded solely in being God's beloved, not in anything they can do or have done. Therefore they do not discipline and teach as ends in themselves. Fear of failure need not hinder, and suffering can be transcended, because having Jesus as Lord frees from false and destructive masters. Truemper describes the teacher's situation this way: "I may choose my cosmology on the basis of what works (and) my politics by what works for proximate good." (25) One might add "I may choose my pedagogy in the light of the experience of successful teachers." He continues: "As a Christian, I have no particular wisdom about the theory of relativity (and) I bring to my study and classroom no Christian literary criticism." (26) Similarly there is no Christian classroom control and believers lack unique insights on how to discipline or when to punish.

The Gospel permeates the school through the educator and also through the worship life of the community. If teachers seek to transmit the Gospel through a discipline policy, code of conduct or

other institutional means, the effort will likely fail. This is so because policies, codes and similar means have a legal function in God's left-hand realm. To seek to use the gospel as the governing principle in, for example, preserving order in a school, is to transmute it into Law. The fact that the Gospel is mediated by persons, not policies or procedures, was grasped by Luther. He can speak of a Christian educator, someone whose work in the secular sphere is gospel motivated. "It is therefore possible, on the basis of Luther's thought to develop a theology of the profession of educator, but not a theology of education as such." (27) Luther does not speak of a Christian state or a Christian commercial sector. He views schools in the same way. For Luther, the Gospel "confirms the office of educator. It supports the educator as a person." (28)

A return to our earlier dying and rising paradigm helps us understand why Jenson, and others (29) strongly encourage the practice of private confession and absolution. As Luther recognized, Baptism implies a daily dying and rising through confession, God's killing us with his Word, and absolution, God's resurrecting us through his Word. "Thus *individual* confession and absolution are the most appropriate forms of God's

dealing with us in Law and Gospel.”(30) Luther defined the whole life of a Christian as one of repentance, and provided an order for private confession and absolution in the *Small Catechism*. The best criterion as to whether teachers in Lutheran schools are on the right track in applying Law and Gospel with students is the extent to which individual confession and absolution is practiced appropriately.

One of God’s most effective means of nurturing children and students is the example of faithful parents and teachers. Young people are incredibly sensitive in this regard. As far as students are concerned, this means that probably the most important application of Law and Gospel occurs, paradoxically, outside the classroom in the worship and prayer life of the teacher. As teachers experience and meditate upon Word and Sacrament, Law and Gospel work miracles which bear much fruit in their students.

The realm of teacher spirituality is where the key to the application of Law and Gospel in Lutheran schools is found. Unless teachers are daily transformed by Sacrament and Word, as Law and Gospel, all attempts to make the Gospel central in classroom interactions will degenerate into legalism, albeit in the guise of the “warm fuzzy” of “a gentle approach

followed by forgiveness.”

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Reforming Schools in a Climate of Skepticism

According to a recent telephone survey of 1,200 Americans conducted by Public Agenda, a New York-based research organization, the public has three top priorities for schools: It wants schools to ensure safety, maintain order, and give students a solid grounding in "the basics." The survey also found that the public is highly skeptical of many innovations touted by reformers, including whole language techniques, early use of calculators, and mixed-ability grouping.

The public's skepticism about innovations stems from three sources, Johnson believes. The first is past experience. Educators' track record with innovations is not good, and this legacy works against reform today. "People still talk about New Math," which is widely considered a failure, she notes. Second, adults believe that educators aren't producing good results today: too many young people lack basic skills. Third, innovations differ from how adults learned, so it's hard for the public to envision how they will work.

Source: *Education Update*, June 1995

“With the Lord begin your task, Jesus will direct it.”

*Children
at
Worship*

Each year the Lutheran school I attended began with a service in the gym (our school building was located two miles from the church), and we sang the hymn "With the Lord Begin Thy Task." The hymn is a good one--not a great one, and not even a personal favorite. But it became a memory attached to an event--the transformation of summer's children into autumn's students.

Even today hymn #483(LW) evokes memories of that upstairs gym with advertising on the stage curtain and our fifth grade teacher playing the piano. The memory would not be so vivid had we sung the hymn only once, but through yearly repetition it had become a ritual, a signpost of the season. Our faculty and many of our mothers sat there singing, bound with us in the rite of passage from child to pupil. We simply joined in, following their example and the principal's direction, little knowing at the time that we were being shaped for our future role as adult worshipers.

How crafty our teachers were! In one deft maneuver they combined firm guidance, good example, enough repetition to attain competence, and the expectation that we could and would participate in the service. As a result--we learned to worship.

Worship. A simple word. A vital act. One that must not be left to chance.

Our children and our society suffer because too much of their spiritual growth is being left to chance, particularly in the area of worship. In the demythologized world of the twentieth century rite and ritual have become unpopular terms, but ancient cultures knew their value. They prepared their children for them with the greatest care, because participation in the rituals of the society meant that the ethical, spiritual and behavioral values of the culture would be passed on. In short, the rite changed the

individual. Unfortunately, as a culture and as a church body we seem intent on robbing our children of the traditions our church offers. Worship in a confessional way is meant to be a life-changing experience, a direct encounter with God through Word and Sacrament.

Worship. A simple word. But not always an easy act. Certainly not an easy act in the current climate of our own church body. Where God demands love, the discussion of worship styles has provoked strife. Where God desires unity, congregations seem more and more willing to split themselves into factions based upon worship styles. So much more time has been spent in argument than in education that one might well ask if our children have the tools to be active participants in any kind of worship at all.

It is time we looked at worship in terms of the skills and talents needed to perform that vital act, and to discern what we as educators can do to equip our children with those skills. We want them to be active listeners and singers, attentive to the Word and at home in prayer. We need to give them a "sacred vocabulary" so that we can share our faith with them both in our homes and in our schools. The articles which will appear in succeeding columns will address various aspects of worship and provide help and insight for those who also are concerned with the spiritual lives of children. There can be no better time, and no more God-pleasing goal. Then, with the Lord, let us all begin our task.†

(Note: In the next issue, Mrs. Barbara Resch will discuss the value of improving children's singing skills and offer suggestions for a suitable hymn curriculum for schools. Mrs. Resch is a doctoral candidate in music education at Indiana University.)

Lutheran Hour Ministries awarded \$75,000 AAL grant for Christmas special

Lutheran Hour Ministries, St. Louis, has been awarded a \$75,000 grant from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) to help underwrite the production of a full-color animated Christmas special.

"Red Boots for Christmas" is being marketed in the top 200 television markets in the United States and Canada for broadcast between Thanksgiving and Christmas. The 30-minute Christmas special was produced by Lutheran Hour Ministries, the multimedia outreach service of the International Lutheran Laymen's League.

"Red Boots for Christmas" is a German folk tale about Hans, a sad, lonely shoemaker who lives in a small village in Austria. Although he has never learned the true meaning of Christmas, he is visited by an angel who brings the promise of a very special gift from God.

Cindy Newkirk

The DCE and the Theology of the Cross

D C E

Introduction

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As DCE's work in modern society, our Lutheran "Theology of the Cross" is increasingly important as we watch the world in which we live and the families with whom we work deteriorating. Divorce, single parenthood, and abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, drug and alcohol) are just some of the problems families are dealing with. Even those who are doing "OK" are dealing with the pressures of school, work, and juggling family time. Today people are encouraged to look within themselves to find strength to deal with their lives. Many Christians are told to just "live for Jesus" or "praise the Lord, anyway." This self centered teaching leaves people empty, discouraged, and ultimately despairing. We, as Lutherans, have God's Word and Sacraments to offer people. The Word and Sacraments are centered on God and lead to eternal life through Jesus. The Theology of the Cross must be studied, and applied by the DCE for it is central to our work in the church and in the world. This article contains two parts. Part one is a brief overview of the Theology of the Cross. Part two is the practical application of the Theology of the Cross.

Part I: The Theology of the Cross

That which we, as Lutherans, believe about God and His Word as expressed in the Lutheran Confessions (1), the writings

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of Luther, Walther and other Church fathers can be called a Theology of the Cross. God reveals himself in the Word, Christ, His Only Begotten Son. Christ's redemptive work was complete when He said "It is finished!" (John 19:30) and bowed his head and died. Through his suffering and death on the cross, Christ accomplished all that God expected as payment for sin. We confess in the Second Article of the Apostles Creed: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried." In the explanation to the Second Article Luther declares: "Who (Christ) has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death." The Second Article of the Apostles Creed and Luther's explanation to the Second Article are confessions of the Theology of the Cross. By His suffering and death, Jesus accomplished all that was necessary for the salvation of humanity.

The point where one must begin when talking about the Theology of the Cross is death. Our lives are full of death--death in the world, death in families, and the death each of us will one day face. Death is the punishment God delivered to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden for their disobedience (Gen. 3:19) and death continues to be the wage for sin (Rom. 6:23). Christ conquers sin and death. Just as the bronze serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness was the antidote to the poisonous snake bites inflicted on the children of Israel, so Jesus' death on the cross is the direct antidote to death. The children of Israel looked to the serpent in faith (nothing more), and they were healed from the bite of death. We look to the cross of Christ in faith (nothing more) and are healed from the bite of sin and death. God comes to us in Christ, His Son, to bring life to our death.

The cross focuses on the suffering Christ, not on the glory and majesty of God. God revealed Himself to the human race in weakness and humility. He comes to us in human form through His Son. Moses asked to see God in His glory and God's reply was "no one can see God in his glory and live" (Exod. 33:19-23). Philip, a disciple of Jesus, requested of Him: "Show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus replied: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:8 & 9). God has revealed himself in His Word, that is His Son, Jesus Christ. God came to earth as the baby in Bethlehem, lived in Nazareth, rode on a donkey, and died as a criminal on a cross. Contrary to all our human expectations, God restored creation to Himself in the suffering and dying of Jesus on the cross.(2)

“The cross, which pronounces an annihilating judgement on all human greatness and all human wisdom, cuts off all human boasting.”(3) Christ’s suffering and death on the cross is eternal life for those who have faith in Him.

Righteousness of Christ

The righteousness of Christ is central to the Theology of the Cross.(4) God has utter contempt for sin, holding us and the whole world accountable to live perfectly, without sin (Rom. 3:19). Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect (Matt 5:48). Jesus is speaking about an outward perfection, as well as complete inward perfection. Nothing less than perfection is acceptable to God. Because of the *total* corruption of our human nature, failure to meet God’s expectations is the only human possibility.(5)

Our human inclination is to think that we are strong and capable of meeting God’s expectations. Jesus’ disciples illustrate the arrogance and presumptuousness that is within all of us. When Jesus walked the road to the cross the disciples thought they could walk with Him. When asked “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They replied “Yes, we are able”(Matt: 20:22). Though they were well trained, sincere, and disciplined men of faith, the disciples failed miserably and in the end left Jesus to die. Martin Franzmann reveals the power of the cross to undo our human notions of greatness.

“On the cross the Law spelled out its last word, and every mouth was stopped. The Gospel is exclusively the Gospel of the Christ; He has no heroes beside Him. He will build His church, thus, in spite of man’s failure and by the Son’s sole triumph. The disciples are not heroes but witnesses, not lords but servants, not religious geniuses, not men gifted with unusual religious intuition but recipients of revelation, not men of outstanding religious attainments but objects of the boundless condescension of God, not heroes but believers. At the cross the disciples learned fully and forever the beggary of faith; they stood at the cross as Abraham had stood at the promise of God--at dead end, where human possibilities end, and God’s possibilities begin (Rom. 4:17-21). And thus ~~they learned~~ like Abraham, to give God His glory”(Rom. 4:20).(6)

When confronted with God on the cross, we fall to our knees confessing our beggarly condition. We are unable to live perfectly to appease the wrath of God. Confessing our failure, the completeness of Christ’s work on the cross covers us. We are declared righteous in spite of our failing. In Holy Baptism we have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Believing and confessing our sinfulness, we cling to our baptism and the righteousness of Christ. Christ appeased the wrath of God by becoming sin, living the law perfectly (2 Cor. 5:21), and dying the death of one who is cursed, in our place (Gal. 3:13). Christ was perfect and righteous, therefore through baptism and faith in Christ, God declares us perfect and righteous (cf. Gal. 3:27, Rom. 4:5). We come before God as perfect, holy, and righteous people, because Christ Jesus our Lord is perfect, holy, and righteous. All our work, play, worship, and prayer are pleasing to God because of the righteousness of Christ

(1 Cor 1:30).

Part II: Application of the Theology of the Cross

The Theology of the Cross must be studied continually, because it is opposed to human reason and logic. It sounds too easy, as though God must expect more from us. Paul says in Ephesians 2:8 & 9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.” Our Christian life is as simple as confessing our sinfulness and being forgiven, for Jesus’ sake. On the other hand, it is so complex that we could study the theology of the Cross continually and never fully grasp the graciousness of God toward undeserving sinners. The Theology of the Cross sounds different than the theology of “popular” Christianity. Popular Christianity might preach: “follow steps one, two and three and your Life will be blessed,” or “read the Bible, do what it says and everything will be ‘OK’.” The Theology of the Cross declares: “if here on earth will not always be “OK”, there will be both joy and sorrow. In all circumstances, God, in Christ has worked out salvation for all who believe in Him.” Following are some examples of situations that might occur in the work of the DCE and any other minister of the Word who confronts similar situations. The words in the response may change for different situations, but the words always point to God’s saving work in Christ.

1. *Loving people who are unlovable is what Jesus would do*, is frequently stated. Our common sense leads us to believe that if we follow a few simple steps we can love unlovable people. That advice leads to failure and despair. It is contrary to our nature to love unlovable people. God, forgive us for Jesus’ sake.
2. *A teenager who hates her parents* might be told, “don’t hate your parents, God wouldn’t want you to hate.” Hatred fills us--we hate getting a traffic ticket, we hate our family members when they offend us, and we hate others for not doing things our way. God, forgive us for Jesus’ sake.
3. *Bible Study is boring, I don’t want to go* is a common response to our invitation to Bible Study. We might reply: “God’s Word is never boring. We need to study and learn it.” Our hearts and minds want to be entertained and we do not gladly hear and learn God’s Word. God, forgive us for Jesus’ sake.
4. *Husband and/or wives struggling with feelings of infidelity and lust for another* are told “It’s not Christian, we shouldn’t feel that way.” Lust fills our hearts and thoughts are sexually impure. God, forgive us for Jesus’ sake.

While simplistic, these examples demonstrate the words of the Theology

of the Cross: “Your sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake.” Forgiveness is granted to those with broken and contrite hearts, to those who are in need. Jesus says: “It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick”(Matt. 9:12). The reality of the forgiveness of sins and having a right relationship with God transforms our hearts. Being forgiven, we likewise, forgive. By the power of Holy Spirit, we are able to love others, care for others, gladly study God’s Word, and live a chaste life. We have died with Christ in our Baptism, and walk in newness of life. We are holy and righteous (through the righteousness of Christ) children of God. Our righteousness is manifested in the lives we live (Rom. 6).

False Teachings

We pray that God the Holy Spirit would keep us in our faith and keep us from falling into teaching what the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:3-6) would have us believe and teach. Satan, tries to tear believers away from the grace and peace that are ours through Christ Jesus our Lord. C.F.W. Walther wrote, “We are all naturally more accessible to the shining and dazzling light of human reason than to the divine truth. For “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him; neither can he know them (1 Cor. 2:14).”(7) False teachings permeate our lives and our Churches, for the Theology of the Cross is opposed by sinful human flesh. Our human nature chooses strength and power, opposing the belief that we are “poor, miserable sinners.” “This hereditary sin is so deep a corruption of nature that reason cannot understand it. It must be believed because of the revelation in the Scriptures.”(8) Listed below are a few examples of popular teachings, which oppose the Word of God and Theology of the Cross.

1. *Sin can be overcome, even eradicated from our lives.* False hope is created by teaching “how to” overcome sin. All hope in our ability to stand before God must be crushed in order that we rely on the Grace of God in Christ Jesus. Bo Geirtz describes the Christian trying to overcome sin:

“This struggle against sin is pure joy in the awakened soul. It is as when a home owner begins to clear the land around his new house. The stones fly and the spade digs happily. But when a person is at work on the field of his heart, he gradually makes the dismaying discovery that there are more stones the deeper he gets. He keeps discovering new sins right along, and they become more difficult to move the more deeply they are entrenched in his inner life. One might possibly break with drinking and profanity and desecration of the Sabbath in a single evening. But pride, that desire to talk about oneself, or to find fault with others are likely to remain still after many months of penitential struggle.

Then one day, when a man is battling sin and is trying to clear the stones from the heart’s field, sweating at the task yet hoping finally to get rid of the last ones so that he may really see the garden grow, his spade strikes solid rock. He digs and scrapes on every side; he tries again and again to budge the rock. Then the terrible realization dawns: it is stony ground through and through.. When he has hauled away load after load of stones and dumped them outside the fence, he still has not

succeeded in making a garden that can begin to bear fruit for God. He has laid bare a ledge of granite, which never can support a living, fruit-bearing tree.

This is the rock foundation we know as the sinful corruption of our human nature, the sinful depravity that remains even after a man has separated himself from all his conscious sins. It is this stony ground that explains why a man is just as great a sinner before God after he has offered God the best he is able to give of obedience and commitment.”(9)

2. *Christ is our Savior, but He is also an example that we must follow to live a Christian life.* Christ is not merely an example, he is our Savior and Lord. Any attempt to make Christ an example to follow, reduces His saving work to something we might be able to accomplish. Asking “What would Jesus do?” leads to despair because we could never do it. “The Gospel is not an invitation to imitate Christ, which would make Christ into a new Lawgiver, another Moses.

Rather, the Gospel is the announcement that God is Gracious for Jesus’ sake.”(10) Confessing that we cannot live as Christ our Savior lived, Christ forgives us. God receives all praise, honor and glory.

3. *Attempting to prove that God is active by outward signs.* (ie. beauty in nature, success, popularity). More subtly, it is looking for God in answered prayers, a positive worship experience, or in finding His “will”. “In these outward signs human beings provide the starting point and we move from the visible to the invisible. ‘show me thy glory’! But human reason is always partial and subject to blind spots. Eye has not yet seen what God has prepared for those who love him.”(11) God is revealed *only* where He promises to reveal Himself, that is in His Word and Sacraments.(12)

Conclusion

The Theology of the Cross is complete in us (and all believers) when we die, for we die in Jesus to eternal life. The disciples witnessed the glory of God for a few short seconds in the Transfiguration, just days before Christ took up His cross. The glory they witnessed was a resurrection glory, a glory that confirmed the mystery of the faith in the suffering, and death of Christ. Jesus’ transfiguration wondrously foreshowed our adoption by grace and assures us of our own resurrection. One day we will see Jesus in all his glory like the disciples saw, not only for a few seconds, but forever in eternity.(13) The conscience is stilled and at peace in the knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins. We are sure, through the Word and Sacraments, that when we die, we will be raised in glory to spend eternity with our Lord.

The Theology of the Cross is weak and foolish, for the cross and death are weak and foolish. Paul says: “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God”(1 Cor

1:18). The “power of God” is not a worldly power, it is the power for the forgiveness of sins. The “power of God” is that in our lives that are filled with sin and death, God has worked out salvation for us in His Son. To people obsessed with “worldly power,” the “power of prayer,” the “power of positive thinking,” etc., the message of forgiveness, life and salvation is weak and foolish. All are offended by the cross, but to those who believe, the cross is the very power of God for the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

The message of the Cross is no different for teenagers than for the oldest members of a congregation. The message of the Cross is that Christ has accomplished *all* that God requires of us. We are “dead in our trespasses and sins, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord”(Rom. 6:1-11 & Eph. 2:1-10). God, in His Word and Sacraments, comes to me, to you, and to the people with whom we work declaring: “your sins are forgiven, for Jesus’ sake.” God will one day call all believers to Himself saying: “Come, I have prepared a place for you,” not by virtue of human accomplishments, but by all that Christ has “finished.” The world around us continues to deteriorate, but we rest assured that God, in Christ, has worked out His plan of salvation for His people. As DCEs we must study and apply the Theology of the Cross for in God’s Word and Sacraments are the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Rejoicing that our salvation has been worked out for us, we join with Mary in the Magnificat: My soul proclaims your greatness O God, and my Spirit rejoices in You (Luke 1:46).†

End Notes

1. The Book of Concord (Fortress Press, 1959).
2. Harold Senkbeil, *Dying to Live* (Concordia Publishing House, 1994) Although no direct quotes were taken from this book, a clear explanation of Christ’s redemptive work is presented.
3. Martin Franzmann, *The Revelation to John* (Concordia Publishing House, 1968) p.9.
4. For insights into the Righteousness of Christ read Luther’s *Galatians 1535*.
5. Cf. Augsburg Confession II; Apology of the Augsburg Confession II; Smalcald Articles III; Formula of Concord, Ep. I; Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration I; I Cor. 2:14; Rom. 5:12; Rom. 7.
6. Martin Franzmann, *Discipleship According to Matthew* (Concordia Publishing House, 1961) p. 215.
7. C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel* (Concordia Publishing House, 1929, 1986) p. 20.
8. Smalcald Articles part III, 1 (Ps. 51:5, Rom. 5:12ff, Exod. 33:20, Gen. 6:5, etc.)
9. Bo Giertz, *The Hammer of God* (Augsburg Publishing House 1960) p. 314.
10. John T. Pless, “Martin Luther; Preacher of the Cross”: *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (April -July 1987) p. 98.
11. Peter Steinke, *Preaching the Theology of the Cross* (Augsburg Publishing House, 1983) p. 22.
12. Augsburg Confession V.
13. Collect for Transfiguration Sunday *Lutheran Worship* (Concordia Publishing House, 1982).

Reaching High “C”

What teacher hasn't had one of those days when she wonders if it is worth all the time, effort, and hassle? Are the problems of rambunctious students, contentious parents, and uncooperative coworkers ever resolved? Couldn't time be better spent elsewhere?

Then one day--out of the blue--will come a smile, an unexpected hug, perhaps a note from a former student we had almost forgotten to say “Hello” to, expressing thanks for being their teacher. Something we had said or done in a class we had long forgotten struck a spark which started them on the road to the wonders of mathematics or the exhilaration of music. For most of us, it only takes a moment like that to recharge our batteries and renew our strength and dedication.

Those who direct children's choirs know exactly what I'm talking about. Elizabeth Gotsch, who directs the children's choir of some twenty 10-14-year-olds at her church in Northbrook, Illinois for an hour each Saturday afternoon, is no stranger to the frustrations of leading children into the world of music, worship, and liturgy. As a children's choir director she has, I am sure, put up with her share of unannounced absences, parents who sometimes just don't seem to care, missed entrances, flat notes, uncooperative singers, and the whole range of challenges that are the normal routine of children's choir directors.

In the midst of a catalog of frustrations, she decided one day to count her--and the congregation's--blessings. She decided to simply list some of the good things that happened at her weekly Saturday afternoon choir rehearsal last March and share it with her congregation in its monthly newsletter.

Here is her list exactly as she wrote it:

- a young chorister learned to his amazement that he could

First

Person

Singular

reach high C while vocalizing;

- two choir members were given a new descant to read and were able to sing it almost immediately;
- two rather quiet young choristers opened their mouths and made beautiful sounds they hadn't heard before;
- one older chorister whose voice is changing was able to make beautiful "on pitch" singing while thinking and controlling his voice;
- one chorister who is reluctant to sing solo, sang most of a stanza alone and sang beautifully and strongly;
- the choir learned that on Palm Sunday if the people hadn't sung their alleluias and praise to Jesus the stones would have cried out; we sang the words of Isaac Watts--"were the whole realm of nature mine, / that were a tribute far too small. / Love so amazing, so divine, / demands my life, my soul, my all!"

Her closing remark: "I don't think an hour could have been better spent anywhere."

I couldn't agree more.✚

Trace the Story of American Lutheran Hymnals

Throughout history, music has provided a support for the mighty acts of God, beginning with creation when "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy"(Job 38:7). As we follow God through history, the sounds and songs of music are almost always near, reinforcing and sustaining the message.

Carl F. Schalk's *God's Song in a New Land: Lutheran Hymnals in America* from CPH (Concordia Publishing House) sketches the path American Lutherans have taken.

This new book in the *Concordia Scholarship Today Series* traces and interprets the history of the goal of a common hymn-book for Lutherans in America.

Schalk also notes the challenges to fulfilling this vision: language and translations, population dispersement, Pietism, rationalism, and ecumenism.

God's Song in a New Land recounts the story of the succession of hymnals that helped shape the faith of Lutherans in North America from 1786 until the present with accuracy and interest. It provides excellent background for what constitutes "suitable" music for the church.

Do Be Do Be Do!

That old crooner, Frank Sinatra, really knows what he is talking about. Quite theological, too!

For I would like to suggest that “Do Be Do Be Do” is an excellent ministry theme for Lutheran educators. Whether we are in the classroom, confirmation class, home, pulpit, older adult session, ladies group, or youth event, “Do Be Do Be Do” says it all.

And as we begin a new Fall season of ministry events and activities, may that be our theme song--the Lord has called us to be “Do Be Do Be Do” people.

Hear it in other words from the Scriptures:

+ “. . . you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God. . .” (I Peter 2:9)

+ “. . . you are the people of God. God loves us and chose us for His own. . .” (Colossians 3:12)

Throughout the Scriptures, God affirms the fact that we are His people. Our role is to BE those people because He loves us and continues to forgive us and give us strength in the Spirit. One large part of our “Do Be Do Be Do” ministry style is to BE the people of God that we are.

And more words from the Lord:

+ “. . . I will show you my faith by what I do.” James 2:18

+ “. . . and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8

In addition to being God’s people, we also are doers of the Word. And as we go about our daily life in the Lord, we join friend Frank in chanting our liturgy of doing and being the people of God!

Why not post this “mission statement” on your classroom walls? Or put it on your refrigerator. Or even in your car. And on days when you or I feel that we haven’t done enough for the Lord, listen for the Spirit to remind us that we first of all are the people of God, and because of that, we are able to do great things for Him, even on days when we fail.

Or on days when we get so wrapped up in the doing of all of our ministry, listen for the Spirit to remind us once again that we are not just doers but, first of all, we are the people of God, because of our baptism in Christ Jesus.

Not a bad statement with which to begin our Fall season. And not a bad statement to remind us of who we are, and to allow us to shout our “Do Be Do Be Do” song out to those who the Lord will put into our lives and hearts this coming season.

As “Do Be Doers,” we can joyfully proclaim with St. Paul that, “Everything we do or say then, is done in the name of the Lord Jesus, as we give thanks through Him to God the Father” (Colossians 3:17).

Thanks, Mr. Sinatra, for the plug. Thanks for getting us moving in the right direction. But above all, thanks, Lord, for coming to us in wonderfully miraculous ways to move us once again to exciting days ahead!

“DO BE DO BE DO--LOOK OUT WORLD, HERE WE COME!”†

Great Teachers What do great teachers have in common? To find out, education consultant *Connie Muther* observed and interviewed more than 60 teachers who are highly regarded by their colleagues and students. These teachers, she found, share three qualities. First, they love teaching, the content they teach, and their students. Second, they are unique. They bring their personal experiences, hobbies, and interests into their teaching. “The more wonderful the teacher, the more weird they are,” Muther said. Third, great teachers have a mission or passion. For many of them, their passion comes out of pain: they want to protect students from the pain they themselves suffered. As a group, great teachers dislike colleagues who complain (especially about students), and they regret not being able to share their ideas more with peers. Advice from this group of teachers to other educators, Muther added, boils down to this: “If you don’t love kids, get out!”

Shirley Morgenthaler

Four-letter put-down

Teaching the young is a challenging profession. Teachers of young children must be curriculum developers far more intensively than teachers of older children. Teachers of young children must individualize for children who do not yet know what it means to wait, to share, to cooperate, to negotiate. Teachers of young children need stores of energy to be everywhere, see everyone, anticipate everything.

Teachers of young children need the stamina of a marathon runner, the wisdom of Solomon, the creativity of a choreographer, the artistry of Monet, the perseverance of the tortoise, and the tenacity of a suction cup. Why is it, then, that so many teachers of young children consider their work to be less important than that of many others?

Have you ever found yourself almost apologizing for your profession, your job? Have you ever said, "Oh, I'm just a kindergarten teacher," or "I just teach first grade," or "I just do child care."? JUST. That four-letter word is an enemy that belies the attitude of the speaker to think of herself as only marginally important. JUST. That four-letter word stands in the way of helping others to regard our work as the important contribution to society which it is.

Teachers of young children are impacting the work force of tomorrow in ways we can only imagine. Where will the creativity of the job force of 2010 be developed? It has its roots in the work done in preschools, child care centers, kindergartens, and primary classrooms across the country.

Did you ever think about the fact that you are already teaching in the 21st century, even though the calendar still says 1995? The children you teach right now will enter the workforce in which year? 2008? 2012? 2016? Will they be ready? Are we ready today?

The task of the early childhood teacher of today

*Teaching
the
Young*

is to be planted firmly in today while looking forward to the qualities needed by tomorrow's adults. Several years ago, John Naisbett wrote in *Megatrends* that the workforce of the 21st century would need to be creative, flexible, and know how to learn new skills, new techniques, even new jobs. From my perspective, that sounds much like the long-range goals of any early childhood teacher. Very clearly, then, our task *is* to impact tomorrow's workforce.

Often, however, the role of the early childhood professional is undervalued because the persons we teach are so small and undervalued. Young children today are often seen as "commodities" or "proof of parenting skills." They may even be regarded as "a bother" or "too expensive" by some. These attitudes are not those of a society which values children. Unfortunately, that lack of value often generalizes to include those who care for and teach the youngest among us.

But do we accept that attitude and lack of value? Are we really "just" teachers of young children. Just say "just" and the value of your work is diminished. Just say "just" and lack of self confidence is showing. Just say "just" and the listener is given one more reason to assume that "anyone" can teach little kids!

Isn't it time we change all this?!

Isn't it time we take ourselves seriously enough to describe our work with pride rather than apology? Isn't it time we develop the professional persona and attitude that radiates pride in our work and our contributions to society? Isn't it time we unhinge the false humility and stop apologizing for our creative--yes, often messy--environments?

Even as Jesus commanded humility, the Apostle Paul called us a chosen nation, set apart for the purposes of God. Teaching is a spiritual gift. Its use is important. Its implementation among the youngest among us may be the most important of all. Wasn't it Jesus who set a young child in the center of the group and said, "This is the most important. This is the goal."?

If Jesus is telling us that children are important, wouldn't he also say that their teachers are important? If we're important to Jesus, shouldn't we be important to ourselves? If we're important, how can we say we "just" teach young children? Let's stop this four-letter put-down!!✚

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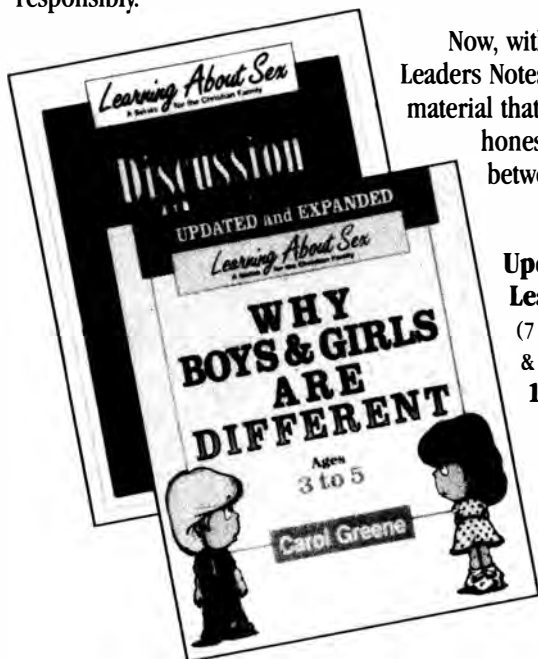


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